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FLORENCE

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THE OLD HOUSES ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE ARNO, LOOKING WEST

On the right of the picture is the tower of the Church of S. Jacopo. A late autumn sunset.

THE CITY OF FLORENCE FROM THE PIAZZALE MICHELANGELO, SAN MINIATO

A winter sunset.

FLORENCE &
SOME TUSCAN CITIES

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PREFACE

To presume to contribute, however modest an addition, to the immense wealth of literature devoted to Florence, her history, and her art, from the days of Villani and of Muratori down to the present time, appears indeed to be beyond the powers of an inexperienced pen. In undertaking these slight descriptions, my aim has been a simple one—to write an accompaniment, if such a term is applicable to letters, to the sketches with which this book is illustrated, and to touch superficially only, such debatable subjects as Tuscan architecture, painting, and sculpture. I have, therefore, attempted nothing more ambitious than to record certain impressions and facts, and with some information to weave in a few legends and stories, not always within reach of the hurried traveller or the non-traveller, who sees foreign countries

through the eyes of books of travel. With regard to the illustrations, the original water-colours have all been done direct from nature, in order that they may bear that impress of truth which work done direct from nature best conveys. In the hope that this book may find its portion of favour, we commit it, with all its imperfections, to the wide sea of public opinion.

CLARISSA GOFF.

Villa dell' Ombrellino,
S. Domenico di Fiesole, Florence.
January 3, 1905.

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I

A RETROSPECT

A STUDY ON THE PONTE VECCHIO

Showing the old sun-dial on the house of Benvenuto Cellini, and one of the ancient towers, built for purposes of defence.

I

A RETROSPECT

FLORENCE is one of the few places that seem to belong not to any particular people or country, but to all mankind. The beauty of her situation on the banks of the river Arno, in a green bed of vineyards and cornfields, surrounded by smiling hills and far-away, snowy mountains-tops, has awakened the admiration and roused the enthusiasm of poets and painters in every age and of every nationality. So also have her picturesque streets and great palaces, her wonderful churches, the marvel of her many towers, and the countless treasures of art which generations of her sons have bequeathed to her.

The citizens of Fiesole, the small hill-city which watches over Florence, were colonisers of the Roman "Florentia" before the barbarians invaded Italy in the fourth and fifth centuries, and out of

the dimness of the early centuries she gradually emerges a small republic, with a peculiar form of government by citizens. It is no peaceful history, however, that lies before us,—no history of a small state developing art and industries under the wise rule of the city fathers,—but rather a long account of revolts, rebellious wars, faction and party strife, embittered by the jealousies of rival families. Pope and Emperor, Guelf and Ghibelline, fought for the mastery in Florence within and without her walls, rent her in twain, and dyed her in blood for many a long century, while she cried aloud for "peace" and there was no peace, as she bowed her fair neck to the yoke of the tyrant. But now and then we find short periods of tranquillity. The clash of arms subsides for a time: one of the many revolts, when brother's hand was against brother's, and the streets were their battlefield, ends with bloody reprisals or with banishment; and then for some years Florence is at peace, and goes her way, growing in riches and importance, finding time to extend her trade and her borders, conquering the neighbouring small states of Pistoia and Pisa, and even the more distant Volterra, growing to be, as we find her in the twelfth century, the most important town in Tuscany, intrigued with and

BANKS OF THE ARNO IN THE EVENING GLOW

Beyond the poplar trees are seen the distant Tuscan hills. Early spring study.

plotted against by Pope and Emperor, according to the complicated politics of the times.

The twelfth century and the two centuries after may be accounted the greatest period in the history of Florence. They saw the birth of Arnolfo di Cambio, Francesco Talenti, and Orcagna, the architects to whom, with Giotto, the first master of painting, Florence owes her glorious Cathedral, her perfect Campanile, the windows of Or San Michele, the splendid Italian Gothic of Santa Croce, and the magnificent masonry of the Palazzo Vecchio. In 1265 was born Dante, the inspired poet who saw Hell, and Purgatory, and Paradise, and dreamed the purest love-dream that the world has ever been told, and though he remains alone supreme among the sons of Florence, many others followed him also of world-wide fame. There were Ghiberti, who cast the gates of Paradise for San Giovanni; the Della Robbia, who gave the Florentines their ideal of the mother of God, with her Divine Son; Donatello and Verrocchio, Sandro Botticelli (with his pensive Madonnas and poetic allegories), the saintly Fra Angelico, Andrea di Castagno, and Lippo Lippi; and, in poetry, Boccaccio, the teller of gay tales, Petrarca and others, down to Michelangelo, whose

name closes the golden rôle of the sons of Florence.

It is not until the fourteenth century that we hear of that great family, the Medici, whose name and fortune are inextricably woven into the web of Florentine history, by their having practically governed the state for four centuries. In 1378, we read, one Salvestro dei Medici was Gonfaloniere (Chief Magistrate of Justice) in the Republic of Florence. He was a rich merchant, a peaceable, honest, and law-abiding citizen, who did much good in his day, and dying left a grandson, whose power far exceeded that of his grandfather's. His name was Cosimo, and he was the first of the Medici who actually ruled in the city. So beneficent and beloved was he, the citizens bestowed upon him the name of "Pater Patriæ"; but, all the same, the Florentines quarrelled with him, imprisoned him, and afterwards banished him to Padua, whence within a year he was recalled, to be reinstated in all his offices. Cosimo never left Florence again. He lived in the splendid palace that the architect Michelozzo built for him, now called the Riccardi Palace, which stands at a corner of the Via Larga, newly named Via Cavour, until a peaceful death put an end to his infirm old age. To this "father

of his country" Florence owes a great deal. He did much to beautify the city, and was a munificent patron and benefactor of the Church and of Art. He built the churches of San Marco and San Lorenzo, and the beautiful abbey of Fiesole, besides many other palaces and villas. He employed Brunelleschi and Michelozzo to design the buildings he erected; and he engaged Donatello, with Benozzo Gozzoli, to decorate the interiors with sculptures and magnificent frescoes, many of which remain fresh and lovely. Of Cosimo's sons the eldest and best beloved died before his father, who was succeeded in his fortune, and in his not yet recognised public position, by the younger, a sickly man, known as Piero il Gottoso or the Gouty. There is not much to be recorded about this (the second) Medici, who lived mostly in the fine villa that Cosimo had built at Careggi, and will be remembered chiefly as the father of Lorenzo il Magnifico, one of the most brilliant figures in history.

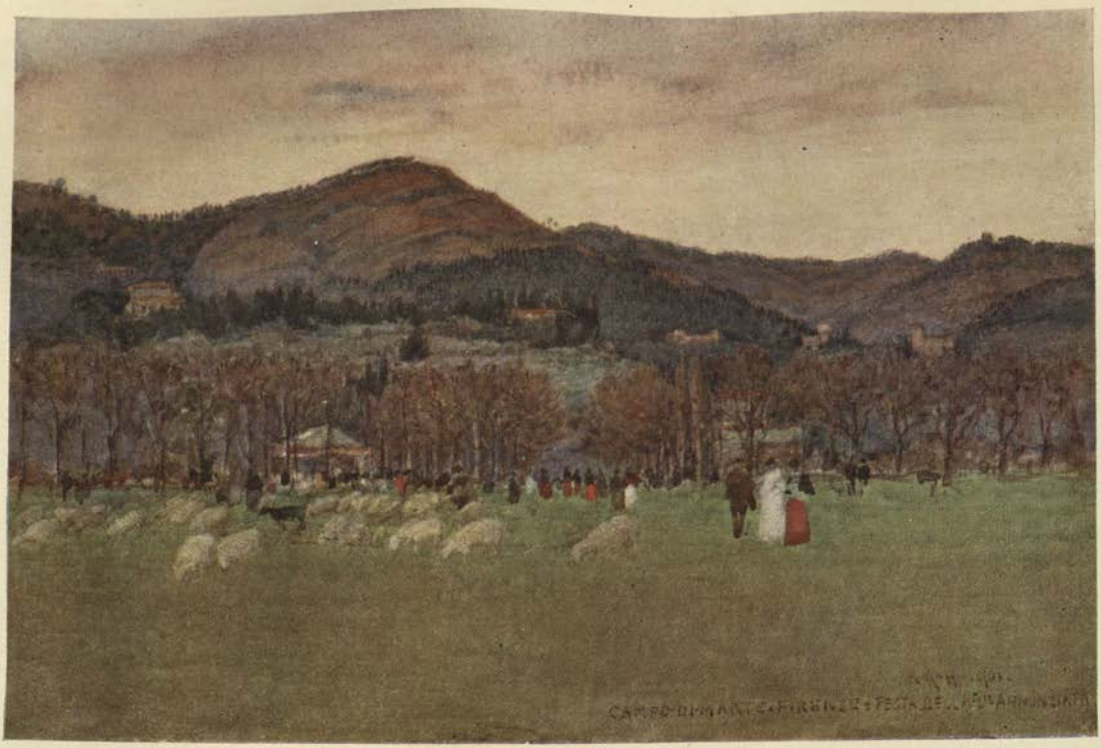
In the person and court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Florence reached the zenith of her glory. She became the source of all the refinement and culture of the age, and attracted to herself the greatest intellects of the time, who

flocked to her hospitable walls, and were received with open arms by the great Medici and his friends. Lorenzo was the guiding mind of that wonderful company. For him Botticelli painted his most exquisite phantasies; for him Poliziano wrote his verses; the fine mind of Pico della Mirandola supplied him with a rich store of intellectual treasure; while the great prior of San Marco, Girolamo Savonarola, prayed for his welfare. As a ruler Lorenzo was hard and tyrannical; nevertheless, Florence flourished under him exceedingly, and attained to a great height of prosperity. But though rich, cultivated, and gifted, understanding thoroughly the art of living magnificently, and knowing the weaknesses of men, he and his court were corrupt, and the people of Florence were influenced by his example, and degenerated until the morals of the community were at a very low ebb.

On the ears of the wicked people and the wicked court the fiery eloquence of Savonarola fell like a cleansing stream. Men shuddered at the words of exhortation and warning that came from the lips of the prior of St. Mark, and the flame of his enthusiasm caught and burned high; but that was only for a time. The pendulum swung back; the fire of enthusiasm slowly decreased,

FROM THE "CAMPO DI MARTE," FLORENCE LOOKING TOWARDS FIESOLE, AND MAIANO

An autumn evening.



failed, and was extinguished in the handful of ashes cast upon the waters of the Arno on the 23rd of May 1498.

Before that day came, Lorenzo il Magnifico had breathed his last in the villa at Careggi, and left in his place his weak son Piero, who, when Charles VIII. invaded Italy, betrayed his country to the French king and fled. By this act of treachery did the son sacrifice the life-work of the father, leaving Florence to her fate, and later losing his own life in the waters of the Garigliano, in a miserable attempt to regain his forfeited inheritance. Lorenzo, however, left another son, who was of very different fibre—Giovanni, who in time became the great Pope Leo X. In him Lorenzo's intense love of art and letters and all beautiful things lived again, and, like his father's, the Papal Court became a haunt of culture and philosophy. Leo X. was the second great patron of Raphael. Under his direction the Umbrian genius accomplished the decoration of the splendid Loggie and Stanze in the Vatican called by his name, which he had begun under Leo's predecessor, Pope Julius II., and painted his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, leaving in these great works an undying monument to the fame of his powerful patron.

Piero, the weakling, was succeeded by his son Lorenzo the younger, who was the father of Catherine, Queen of France, and mother of the Valois kings. After this younger Lorenzo and Pope Clement VII. the Medici of the older branch degenerated until they were represented only by the wretched and illegitimate Alessandro, created duke by the Emperor, who misruled the state, committed abominable crimes, and was finally murdered in the palace of the first Cosimo, Pater Patriæ, by his cousin Lorenzino, in 1537. A different Medici succeeded the black Alessandro—Cosimo, representative of the younger branch, son of the hero Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and grandson of the celebrated Catarina Sforza, the Lady of Forli. This Cosimo was the first Grand-duke of Tuscany, a title conferred upon him and his heirs by Pope Pius V. and the Emperor. He was followed by his son Francesco, to whom Florence and the world owe the magnificent collection of pictures in the Uffizi Gallery, which he began. Francesco's brother Ferdinand I. succeeded him, and in his turn was followed by his son Cosimo II., and by three more Medicean grand-dukes, who brought the dynasty to a close. These were Ferdinand II., Cosimo III., and Giovanni Gastone, who died

in the year 1737. Of the later grand-dukes of the house of Medici, all save Giovanni Gastone ruled well and justly, although under them Florence declined in power and prosperity. Giovanni Gastone, the exception, was good for nothing, and he having no children, the question of a successor to the grand-duchy of Tuscany became a serious one for the Powers.

The first choice of the Powers fell upon a brother of the King of Spain, whose mother was a princess of Parma, therefore an Italian; but a vehement protest on the part of Giovanni Gastone caused them to abandon this idea, and they finally offered the grand-duchy to Duke Francis of Lorraine, coupled with the hand of the Arch-Duchess Maria Theresa of Austria, on condition that he gave Lorraine in exchange to France. After some hesitation, Duke Francis accepted these terms, and thus became successor to that wonderful race of merchants and princes who not only rose to supreme power within their own country, but also gave three Popes to the Holy See and two Queens to the kingdom of France. Duke Francis of Lorraine, by this arrangement, became not only Grand-duke of Tuscany but also Emperor of Austria on the accession of his wife, the great

Empress Maria Theresa, to the throne. He resided in Vienna, from which he sent as his representative to rule in Florence his son, who succeeded him as Emperor and Grand-duke of Tuscany. The sons and grandsons of the Emperor Francis and Empress Maria Theresa ruled over Tuscany in succession, and ruled her well. They were homely, kindly people, hospitable to strangers, and they had the welfare of their adopted country at heart.

A break in their line came when Napoleon I. conquered Italy, and gave Tuscany to his sister Elisa, who kept her court in Florence until her brother's misfortunes drove the so-called Queen of Etruria from the throne, and reinstated the Lorraine grand-dukes, who came back, to be deposed in their turn after those stormy days in which Italy arose and fought for her life among the nations, and by the vote of her citizens Florence became incorporated in the kingdom of United Italy, under the first king, Victor Emanuel of Savoy, in the year 1860.

Out of the death-struggle of the old order rose the new kingdom, and the Florence we know to-day—the same, yet changed. Here are her old palaces, her streets, and her churches. Some ancient

BANKS OF THE ARNO

Looking west. A spring evening.

landmarks have been swept away; some new and hideous work has been put in their place. Through the heart of the city run electric tramways; overhead rise flights of telegraph and telephone wires, and the streets resound with the horns of motor-cars and motor-tricycles. Progress (as we now understand it) has taken possession of the ancient city of the Medici and the Lorraine-Hapsburgs; yet her character is still distinct, still retaining that cosmopolitanism which has always been a part of Florentine life. To the men and women of the Anglo-Saxon race Florence is rich in reminiscences, for so many English and American men of art and letters have made it their second home. At San Domenico there stands the fine villa in which Walter Savage Landor wrote and died. The great Medici villa at Careggi will remind them not only of Lorenzo the Magnificent, but also of G. F. Watts and the brilliant band that surrounded him in his youthful days when he worked in Florence. The heights of Bellosguardo speak of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and a prosaic house in the town was once the home of Anthony Trollope, while in some one of these streets, down which the people pass with hurrying feet, Charles Lever wrote his cheery tales. But of all the famous men

and women who of late years knew and loved Florence, there are two whose names will be for ever linked with hers — Robert and Elizabeth Browning, whose home was the "Casa Guidi," from the windows of which Mrs. Browning watched the stir and stress of the early days of Italian liberty. Above the dark doorway, through which her slight form must so often have flitted, the passer-by may read the graceful tribute that the Italian poet, Tommaseo, has offered to the genius of his English sister.

QUI SCRISSE E MORI
E. B. BROWNING

Che . . . fece del suo verso
aureo anello fra Italia
e Inghilterra.

Thy rare gold ring of verse
(the Poet praised),
Linking our England to
his Italy.

II

S. MARIA NOVELLA

PIAZZA SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Showing the façade of the Church, with the goals erected for chariot racing, surmounted by bronze lilies designed by John of Bologna.

Piazza S. Maria Novella
FIRENZE

II

S. MARIA NOVELLA

Six o'clock on a warm summer's evening is a charmed hour at which to find oneself in the great church of S. Maria Novella. Then the mellow light falls warm and golden through the high windows upon the long nave, disclosing new beauties everywhere, and especially revealing the two frescoes on either side of the great west door, the lovely "Annunciation" by an unknown artist, and Masaccio's "Crucifixion."

Michelangelo bestowed a beautiful name on this church. He called it "La Sposa,"—the Bride, saying, "She is as lovely as a bride adorned for her husband"; and it is not difficult even for the unlearned to understand the master's admiration for the rare beauty of this loveliest of churches.

Long before the present church was built there stood on this spot a small chapel called St. Mary

in the Vineyard. This having been destroyed, the Dominicans, with the assistance of the Rucellai family, began the new St. Mary's in the year 1229. The design for the church was prepared by three Dominican friars, and is Italian Gothic, the shape being a Latin cross. The long nave is raised midway by one step, so that one seems to rise by slow degrees from the west door to the High Altar and to the group of chapels on either side of the choir.

In most Italian Gothic churches one generally finds the choir decorated with frescoes, illustrating the story of the patron saint of that particular church. In Santa Maria Novella it was Domenico Ghirlandaio whom the monks chose to paint the "Life of Our Lady" in their choir. Very beautiful and full of tender grace are these frescoes, and it is always a delight to return and gaze again and again upon the lovely groups. Especially delightful are the ladies in St. Anne's sick-chamber, approaching to admire the new-born infant lying so quietly in the arms of the nurse, some of whom are contemporary portraits.

From the soft beauty of Ghirlandaio's frescoes we turned to gaze on the glory of the stained-glass in the great east window, which must surely be unrivalled in depth and vividness of colour. Here

INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, WITH THE STROZZI CHAPEL

S^ta Maria Novella
Firenze

Our Lady sits enthroned with the Divine Child; and around her stand St. Stephen and St. Lawrence, St. John the Baptist, the city's patron, and the great apostles, clad in robes of crimson and blue, of green and black. It is a marvel of what can be produced in stained-glass, and of the power and patience of those old craftsmen, who left such wonders and such lasting proofs of their skill. Mr. Hare attributes this window to one Alessandro Fiorentino, who lived in 1401, a pupil of Ghirlandaio; but other authorities simply assert that it was designed by Filippino Lippi.

Probably the thoughts of most people, when visiting S. Maria Novella, turn to Cimabue, the first great master of the Tuscan school, and his famous picture of "Our Lady" surrounded by angels and saints in the Rucellai chapel in the north transept.

Modern criticism, which gives the famous Madonna of the Rucellai chapel to a Sienese master, has considerably destroyed the charm of the old-world story of how this picture came to be painted, in the year 1270, by Giovanni Cimabue, a pupil of the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella. Tradition tells how this painter, who was Giotto's master, while engaged on this picture, shut himself into his studio, which stood in a garden near to

the old gate of San Piero, and refused to admit any one within his doors. Soon after Charles of Anjou, brother to Louis XI., King of France, arrived in Florence on his way to take possession of the kingdom of Naples. On this Prince expressing a wish to visit Cimabue's studio, he was permitted to do so, and so great was his admiration for the great picture that his enthusiasm caught the people, who insisted on conveying the master's great Altar-piece in procession to its appointed place in the Rucellai chapel of Santa Maria Novella. This they did with such lively expressions of joy and delight, that this quarter of the city was from that time forward called the "Borgo Allegro," and is so to this day.

Another interesting and beautiful object in the Rucellai chapel is the tomb of Blessed Villana, daughter of Andrea di Lapi, married to one of the Benintendi family. The legend tells how, as a girl, Villana was very pious and drawn towards the religious life, but after her marriage she turned away from the old influences, throwing herself into all the gaieties and pleasures the world offered to the young wife. Her vanities and amusements, however, were short-lived, for an awful vision was sent to warn her of the danger she was in. One

day, while admiring herself in some new and beautiful attire, she suddenly saw in her mirror the grinning face of a horrible demon peering over her shoulder at the attractive reflection. Seized with terror and repentance, Villana fled from the world and died a saint, at the early age of twenty-eight, in the year 1360. Rosellino has carved her youthful form asleep upon her tomb, with angels drawing the curtains from either side her couch, disclosing the peaceful figure of the girlish Beata.

The little Strozzi chapel, to the right of the High Altar, was decorated by Filippino Lippi with frescoes of the lives of the two apostles, St. John and St. Philip, and beyond, at the extreme left of the south transept, a narrow door leads to a short flight of steps and the "Great Cloister." To the right a tiny chapel contains the tomb of the Marchesa Strozzi Ridolfi and the Giotto frescoes of the life of St. Joachim and St. Anne, parents of Our Lady, so highly praised by Ruskin. Of this fact the guide, should you happen to have engaged one, does not forget to remind you. He will discourse on "il gran' Inglese, Giovanni Ruskino," in his soft Tuscan speech, while you cannot refrain from marvelling how it was that the great critic came so to praise these frescoes,

and so to be-little the Ghirlandaios of the choir as to condemn their beauty in the eyes of a whole generation of his unquestioning disciples.

But as our object was to reach the Greater Cloister, and the so-called Chapel of the Spaniards, we did not linger over the Giottos, but walked on, until we caught sight of the delicate stone traceries and the beautiful, slight columns, supported by lions, which flank its massive door. Originally designed in the year 1320 for a rich Florentine by the great Dominican architect, Fra Jacopo Talenti, it is not at all certain how this chapel came to be called "La Capella degli Spagnoli." It is thought by some that Duke Cosimo I. gave it to the large train of Spaniards who accompanied his wife, Eleanor of Toledo, from her native country to Florence; and by others that the name was derived from the Spanish merchants, of whom there were many in the city in those days, celebrating every year in this chapel with great solemnity the feast of their patron, St. James.

The great frescoes which decorate the interior walls of the Spanish chapel are by Taddeo Gaddi and Simone Memmi, and describe the triumph of the Dominican Order of Preachers, and scenes from the lives of our Lord and St. Thomas Aquinas,

THE GREEN CLOISTER OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

Showing the entrance to the famous Spanish Chapel, and one of the elaborate and beautiful Gothic windows.

CHIOSTRO·S·MARIA·NOVELLA·FIRENZE

Doctor of Theology. In these frescoes the whole spirit of the Dominican Order is set forth. On the right hand the Dominican fathers, the "Dogs of our Lord," encouraged by their saintly founder, are preaching, exhorting, hearing confessions, and wrestling mightily with evil and sin in this world; while above they rise to their eternal reward, and are received into everlasting habitations with the whole Church Triumphant. On the opposite wall St. Thomas Aquinas is seated on a throne, surrounded by Angels, Virtues, and Powers; beneath his feet are the heresies confounded by his great work, *The Summa Teologica*, which is the chief glory of his Order. Standing there before these pictured walls, we realised the lesson which Fra Jacopo Talenti wished to teach his brother monks through those great painters, who put of their best into the Spanish chapel. His beloved Order, spreading over the world, must fight to the end of all things against the enemies of its Lord and Master. Its members must go forth to conquer in His strength, and, guided by the light vouchsafed to them through the great saint who was His instrument, keep ever before their eyes the vision of the reward laid up for those who are faithful unto death.

The Green Cloister, with its wide, sunny spaces,

was very beautiful in the evening light, and we turned away with reluctance, passing out into the Piazza of S. Maria Novella, which recalled to us another Dominican saint, Peter the Martyr. This Piazza is one of the most spacious in Florence, and was purposely so designed in order to accommodate the crowds that flocked to hear saint Peter the Martyr preach. Later, however, the Piazza was used for a very different purpose,—for the chariot races organised by Cosimo I., the goals for which —two conspicuous obelisks resting on bronze tortoises, and crowned by the lilies of Florence, executed by John of Bologna—are still standing.

Facing Santa Maria Novella is the beautiful Loggia of San Paolo, with the lovely saints of Luca and Andrea della Robbia gazing over the Piazza in the spandrils of Brunelleschi's columns. The Loggia partly conceals one of the most beautiful of Andrea's works, the "Meeting of St. Francis with St. Dominic," which is placed in a lunette above a door, now leading into the sale-rooms of a well-known dealer in antiquities. The two great saints are shown at the moment of their meeting embracing one another with outstretched arms, their beautiful, holy faces full of an ecstatic joy at the fulfilment of their most ardent desire—to con-

SUNSET OVER MONTE OLIVETO

From the banks of the Arno, on a January evening.

verse together. One feels they are on the threshold of that long night of mystical communion passed in the little convent cell of Santa Sabina on the Aventine Hill, after which they parted, never to meet again in this world.

The long Via della Scala, leading to a more modern quarter of the town, leaves the Piazza Santa Maria Novella to the left of the Loggia di San Paolo. A few paces down it brought us to the old-world pharmacy of the Dominicans, which is a pleasant place, not only to buy the sweet waters and perfumes, the orris-root powder and honey water, made there after the ancient recipes of the Fathers, but also to linger in. For it wears an old-world air, in spite of modern restoration, and possesses a little cloistered garden and a quiet unused chapel decorated with frescoes by the Aretino. The colours are still fresh, and a peaceful spirit haunts this small sanctuary, where, probably, in olden times the monks came to meditate on the Passion of our Lord which is pictured on the walls. We could not leave this street without walking a few steps further on to gaze once more at a beautiful little Madonna and Child, filling a shrine at the angle of a neighbouring street corner; and we walked yet a little further to admire a fine work,

known as the "Madonna of St. James of Ripoli," by Andrea della Robbia. But the door above which this lunette is placed no longer leads into the church of St. James of Ripoli, the Italian Government having appropriated it and the convent attached as barracks. However, in spite of this change, Our Lady still stands above the old church door, holding her Divine Child in her encircling arms, with a sweet, sad expression on her lovely face; while St. James, with his pilgrim's staff and book, and St. Dominic, with his lily, on either hand guard them both.

The long vista of the Via della Scala closes with groups of tall trees standing within the famous Cascine, that delicious wooded park which affords the Florentines so much pleasant recreation. Few, having once visited it, forget the freshness of the Cascine after the glare and dust of the Florence streets on a hot June day; the cool shade beneath the great trees, the broad green spaces carpeted by flowers, and the thick undergrowth allowed to riot in a tangle which nature alone restrains. Driving along the woodland ways, between the tall tree trunks the Arno gleams, as it flows beside the quiet, sunlit paths towards the sea, while glimpses of the towers and domes of Florence,

A FAVOURITE WALK ALONG THE RIVER IN THE CASCINE, LOOKING TOWARDS SAN MINIATO

In the evening glow.

framed in the green vistas, add touches of deep glowing colour. Continue to the very edge of the wood and you will find yourself face to face with the beautiful Val d'Arno, stretching far away into misty blue distances. The broad, strong river winds past the young green of the vines and mulberry trees, which join the gray gnarled olives at the foot of the purple Tuscan hills. The whole glorious landscape bathed in the golden light of the sun, sinking to rest behind the far distant mountains of Carrara, is full of a divine peace as, gazing on it, one listens to the chimes for "Ave Maria" floating across the river, from the village churches scattered over the plain, and from Florence hidden by the green woods of the Cascine.

III

SANTA CROCE

PIAZZA SANTA CROCE

Showing the old Stufa Palace, and the dome of the Pazzi Chapel on the right. In the centre stands the modern statue to Dante.

III

SANTA CROCE

WHEN studying the churches of Florence, one is tempted to draw a comparison between Santa Croce and Santa Maria Novella, which are in many respects alike. They appeal to us as two living and beautiful monuments raised by the piety and devotion of those great religious Orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans. They resemble each other in several points of architecture, and on their side of the Arno they divide the town, as it were, into two quarters, standing at its two extremes, but in old days were outside the city walls. In the year 1294 Arnolfo di Cambio, the Cathedral architect, began the great work of Santa Croce. His design, as was that of the earlier church, is Italian Gothic, shaped like a Latin cross, the nave ending in a choir and chapels. Just as the one church is full of the spirit of St. Dominic,

the fighting "Dog of the Lord," so here, in the church of the Holy Cross, one breathes the gentle spirit of St. Francis, which seems to pervade the quiet chapels and the great nave, so full of the sunshine that the Saint of Assisi loved. Santa Croce may be truly called a temple of peace, for here Florence has laid her greatest sons to rest, and many are the stirring memories and famous names which meet us as we read inscription after inscription on the crowded monuments around the walls and at our feet. Here lies Galileo Galilei, and to Santa Croce Michelangelo was carried from Rome to sleep his last sleep in his native Florence. Here, too, are the graves of Macchiavelli the philosopher, Alfieri the poet, and his unfortunate patroness, the Countess of Albany; and it is in Santa Croce, too, that the city has made a tardy reparation to the greatest of all her immortals, Dante. Though his ashes lie in the tomb at Ravenna, here, in her Pantheon, Florence has raised a monument to his memory; but, alas! sadly inartistic in design.

Leaving the great men of earlier generations, we find that those of modern times are not forgotten, for here are recorded the names of Cherubini and Rossini, and those of two of the makers of modern

Italy, Cavour and Manin. The names and deeds of all these notable Florentines (and of the last two, who were not even Tuscan, but served all Italy) are well known; not so many other humbler citizens who in their day did good work for their beautiful city, and sleep beneath the sepulchral stones of Santa Croce. These remind those of us who read Ruskin of a certain passage in his *Mornings in Florence*, concerning one particular fourteenth-century tomb, greatly admired by him, appreciation of which he insists upon as being an infallible test of the intelligence and taste of the modern traveller. Stroll into Santa Croce some spring morning, and you may witness the not unusual spectacle of a group of Anglo-Saxon tourists gathered about the effigy of old Galileo Galilei, an ancestor of the famous astronomer, examining it with eager interest, and turning from time to time to the text-book in their hands. This is the passage they are studying:—

"If you can see that the lines of that cap are both right and lovely, that the choice of the folds is exquisite in its ornamental relations of line, and that the softness and ease of them is complete,—though only sketched with a few dark touches,—then you can understand Giotto's drawings and

Botticelli's, Donatello's carving and Luca's. But if you see nothing in *this* sculpture, you will see nothing in theirs, *of* theirs. Where they chose to imitate flesh, or silk, or to play any vulgar, modern trick with marble (and they often do)—whatever, in a word, is French, or American, or Cockney in their work, you can see, but what is Florentine and for ever great—unless you can see also the beauty of this old man in his citizen's cap—you will never see."

Poor tourists! What a rock to make shipwreck on! Little did the pious Galilei think, when he caused this stone to be carved for his father, that hordes of barbarians from those mysterious lands over the seas, of which, perchance, he had heard from some adventurous traveller, would come in later times to gaze at that sculptured effigy, with no murmured prayer for the repose of the soul of the learned doctor, but with the desperate intention of applying Ruskin's test to their own inexperienced souls, as a guide among the shoals and shallows of Florentine Art.

As we stood inside the west door, admiring the vast proportions of the great nave, the roof, described by Ruskin as "barn-like," claimed our attention. It is immense, and supported on beams, and,

THE FRANCISCAN CHURCH OF SANTA CROCE, LOOKING EAST

Showing the pulpit, and Bardi Chapel to right of the High Altar. The fine beamed roof is being cleared of white-wash, and the original painting restored.

not long ago, beneath the disfiguring whitewash, a decoration in a fine design of red and blue and gold was found which is now being carefully restored, and when the whole is uncovered the church will gain enormously in beauty and warmth of tone, without losing its peculiar property of sunniness. Before penetrating deeper into the nave we turned to look up at the lovely rose-window, burning like a jewel above the great door. Beneath it stood out boldly the celebrated "Tablet of St. Bernardino of Siena," so often repeated over the house doors in Tuscany. With his own hands St. Bernardino placed his tablet, the now universal monogram of our Lord, surrounded by rays of glory, which he designed, on the west wall of this great church of his Order, and under it he wrote: "In nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur coelestium, terrestrium, et inferorum."

Turning away, we walked forward to admire the lovely holy-water stoup, with the figure of St. Francis standing in prayer surmounting it, and on a column above, to the right, we found Rosellino's beautiful little Madonna del Latte, and remembered the heroic act which it commemorates. It was placed here as a perpetual tribute to Francesco Nori, Prior of the Republic, who gave his

life to save his master's. On that awful morning in the Duomo it was this brave man who, throwing himself between the Medici and the Pazzi's hired assassin, received the dagger stroke which ended his life, and allowed Lorenzo the Magnificent to fly to the sacristy unharmed. It is indeed fitting that this self-sacrificing Prior of the Republic should lie among the illustrious dead in the church which has seen the form and listened to the voice of Francis of Assisi, whose all-embracing love of men finds an echo in the death of Francesco Nori. Benedetto da Maiano made the beautiful marble pulpit a few paces farther on, and in the upper portion he has carved the life of St. Francis; while in little sculptured niches below he enthroned the virtues which were so conspicuous in the Saint's life and works—Faith, Hope, and Charity which is Love, and Fortitude, and Justice.

As we walked through the long aisles, at every step we stopped to enjoy some beautiful work, and to realise how one great man after another gave of his best to this church of the Holy Cross. We stood before Rosellino's magnificent tomb, which contains the dust of Lorenzo Bruni, in his time a historian of repute, and from thence we crossed the nave, to be lost in fresh wonder at the beauty

of Desiderio da Settignano's carving on another tomb—that of the Greek scholar and orator, Carlo Marzuppini. Close by, against the lateral door, Donatello, their great contemporary, has left a lovely, graceful Annunciation, in grey "macigno" or freestone. From gazing at these beautiful carvings we passed to the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, there to find two striking statues, in white della Robbia ware—one of St. Francis, and, facing him, one of St. Bernardino of Siena. On the right, passing out of this chapel, is the sacristy door, and at the end of the long passage into which it opens we entered the Medici chapel, used before the suppression of the convents for the novitiate. As we entered we were immediately struck, and held in deepest admiration, by one of the loveliest of all Andrea della Robbia's altar-pieces,—Our Lady enthroned and surrounded by saints,—executed in delicate blue-and-white majolica ware. The Madonna sits with the Divine Child in her arms, angels crowning her from above, and grouped on either side of her stand St. Francis and St. Bernardino, St. John Baptist (the city's patron), and St. Lawrence (the patron of the Medici); while behind them is that loveliest of saints and princesses, Elizabeth of Hungary, with

her lap full of roses, and another Franciscan Saint and Bishop, St. Louis of Toulouse. An exquisite frieze of angels' heads crowns the whole, while an inscription below sets forth that this work was executed for the "Company of Castelsaggio," probably a Confraternity devoted to good works, to Our Lady, and to St. Francis. To the right, as one enters the Chapel, is a Tabernacle, by Mino da Fiesole; and so our roll of the great fifteenth-century sculptors was complete.

Santa Croce is as rich in fine frescoes as it is remarkable for beautiful sculpture, and nearly every one of the churches and chapels is covered with interesting work by the great painters of the early Tuscan school. The frescoed walls of the choir illustrate the history of the finding of the True Cross, beginning with the planting by Seth on the grave of his father Adam of the tree which supplied the wood for the Cross, and on to its discovery in Jerusalem, by the Empress Helena, three hundred years after our Lord's death. Agnolo Gaddi, son of Taddeo, has represented this wonderful legend in eight pictures, the colours of which are dim and faded; but the work is full of charm, and, unlike Giotto's frescoes in the Bardi chapel close by, has not undergone restoration. In the

dim little chapel of the Bardi family we read the story of St. Francis, as Giotto imagined and painted it, and very simply and touchingly has he told it. He has painted the legend round the walls, while above, in the arches of the roof, he reminds the world of those great virtues which are the foundation of all monastic rule — Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity. On the east wall Giotto has painted four great saints of the Franciscan Order —St. Clare (the spiritual daughter of St. Francis), the great Bishop Louis of Toulouse, and the two royal saints, Elizabeth of Hungary and Louis, King of France. Above the altar stands the Seraphic Father himself, painted by Cimabue, and believed to be an authentic portrait. Giotto also painted the chapel for the Peruzzi, which is next the Bardi, with frescoes even more beautiful, describing scenes in the lives of St. John the Apostle and of St. John Baptist. Particularly fine in composition, and in religious feeling and colour, is the scene of the Evangelist's death and ascension into Heaven, where our Lord receives His beloved disciple into everlasting glory. From the Giottos we crossed to the Chapel of the north transept to look at Ghirlandaio's fresco of Our Lady giving her girdle to St. Thomas, and at Taddeo Gaddi's life

of Our Lady, on the opposite wall, with the very lovely Annunciation, in which the glorious angel, poised in air, gives his divine message to the Blessed Virgin, who gazes meekly up at him. These same frescoes are found almost in replica, painted by Taddeo Gaddi for the Rinuccini family, in their chapel in the sacristy, which they enclosed with very beautiful wrought-iron gates. For this chapel the same master painted the life of St. Mary Magdalene, full of religious sentiment and fine feeling. We left the sacristy, after gazing as long as we might, and found our way into the wide Cloister, round the side of which runs a fine open loggia, the pale and faded frescoes in which were executed by pupils of the great masters who bequeathed all that wealth of beauty within the stately church.

Although our object was a visit to the Pazzi chapel, we involuntarily paused, impressed by a sense of the great charm of Santa Croce, seen from without. From the broad green space of the Cloister the eye is lifted upward to the slender, graceful Campanile, its red-brown outline silhouetted against the deep blue of the April sky, and then sinks down to the long lines and the fine brickwork of nave and transept, and rests finally on the classic

IV

PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA, WITH PALAZZO VECCHIO, THE TOWERS OF THE BARGELLO, AND BADIA

On a windy spring day.

BONNARD

dome and portico of the Pazzi chapel, which was facing us. This perfect little building the world owes to the genius of Brunelleschi, who designed it, and to those great artists, Luca della Robbia, Donatello, and Desiderio da Settignano, who decorated it within and without. Donatello and Desiderio carved the frieze of angels' heads, and designed the graceful columns of the portico, and in the vaulted roof, within the porch, we find the work of Luca. In the central vault he set the Pazzi arms, enclosed in one of his beautiful garlands, and their device—two dolpins and four daggers—is repeated frequently in the design covering the remaining vault of the ceiling. Inside the chapel he carved a frieze, the principal figure in which is the "Agnus Dei," and above this are twelve round plaques, in shadowy blue-and-white enamel, representing the Twelve Apostles. These latter are very fine in drawing, and simple and beautiful in execution. Especially delightful is the St. Thomas, represented as quite a youth, seated reading from a scroll. In the dome above the frieze and the medallions four larger plaques present again the four Evangelists, but so violent in colour, so widely different in character from the Apostles below them, that it is

easy to understand the discussions their existence has given rise to. These discussions have been many, and learned; but now it appears to be generally agreed to attribute the plaques to Brunelleschi.

A straight path leads from the Pazzi chapel to the gateway, and here we took our farewell of the Cloister of Santa Croce, with the statue of St. Francis rising in the centre of the great space, surrounded by the fine arcades of the ancient Cloister, and walked into the piazza. All the children of Florence appeared to be playing around the colossal statue of Dante, and their shrill voices filled the broad square as we crossed it, marking as we went by the wonderful Stufa palace, on the left-hand side, its projecting upper stories coloured with frescoes, somewhat faded but still interesting.

Our road lay through the Via dei Neri, and we were soon within its winding ways. Green-shuttered, their colour mellowed to a warm yellow by the kindly sun, tall and ancient houses line either side of the street, the lower floors occupied by little dark shops. Most of the goods for sale are suspended above the doorways, and overlap on to the pavement—here a "Merceria"

A COOK'S SHOP IN THE MERCATO VECCHIO, BEFORE ITS DEMOLITION IN 1884

Here salt-fish was sold, and wine and oil. The two models of ships have been preserved.

R. Cott.
MERCATO VECHIO. FIRENZE.

(draper); next door a grocer, or a coppersmith, whose pots and pans of classical shape hang suspended from the ceiling. In these shops are to be found the Tuscan lamps called "Lucerne," which are fed with olive oil, and the curious "scaldopiedi," resembling small brass boxes with pierced lids, which, when filled with live ashes, keep Florentine feet and hands warm in winter, and are most comforting in days of icy "tramontano" or north wind. Loud and various were the street noises which reached our ears as we passed along. Here was a vegetable seller, with his cart and patient donkey; a little farther a broom seller, with long-handled mops of feather and straw, each man offering his goods with a peculiar cry. At one street corner a vendor of "scampoli"—remnants of woollen and cloth goods—had drawn up his barrow, and was surrounded by a bevy of bargaining women, while above all other sounds came at intervals the loud cracking of the cabmen's whips, like pistol shots, announcing their approach and scattering the good-natured crowd on every side. Those crowded streets of Florence are somewhat perilous, and where carriages, omnibuses, and carts all meet and have to pass in such a narrow space, it is a wonder that smaller vehicles can do so—let alone electric

tramcars! Happily, however, accidents are rare; and we arrived safely at the steep, short street between the Uffizi Palace and the Palazzo Vecchio, which led us on to the Piazza della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi.

THE BRONZE BOAR OF THE MERCATO NUOVO

On a Thursday morning, when the Flower Market is held. Late spring-time.

IV

PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

IV

PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

ACROSS the Piazza della Signoria the life of Florence flows to-day as it has flowed for at least five hundred years. The people hurry backwards and forwards, pursuing their ways to business or to pleasure, and idlers lounge on the steps of the Loggia dei Lanzi, where Cosimo the First's German Lancers once kept guard—where now Donatello's "Judith" and Cellini's "Perseus" occupy the soldiers' places, and where every Saturday morning the lotto is drawn. In Italy every one plays at the Government lottery, and in every town the lots are drawn on Saturday; the winning numbers being displayed afterwards over the doors of the Banks found in nearly every street. In Florence an orphan child is always chosen to draw the lottery numbers—an office which he or she, as the case may be, performs in a thoroughly business-like way.

Modern Florence has invaded the old Square, and modern houses face the Palazzo Vecchio, while on Fridays a vast crowd of country people assemble here after market. Then the piazza is full to overflowing with peasants who have come in to dispose of their produce, and many and varied are the types to be seen. As a rule the Tuscan peasant is a graceful specimen of humanity, dark and intelligent-looking, with a delightful habit of gesticulating with his hands, in a manner which makes it almost possible for him to dispense with words. In winter these peasants wear long coats in wonderful shades of bright brown and a peculiar vivid green, with collars and cuffs of fur, and in summer they are clad from head to foot in cool linen. Among the gesticulating groups cabs and carriages, with much shouting and cracking of whips, slowly thread their way, scattering to right and left the ever-shifting, brightly-coloured crowd, with its admixture of inquiring tourists.

Overlooking the throng of market-people and citizens, the little groups of tourists and loungers in the Loggia, the grand old palace of the ancient Republic of Florence towers grim and strong. Arnolfo di Cambio built this battlemented fortress in the thirteenth century, as a residence for the

Gonfaloniere (Chief Magistrate of Justice) and the Priors of the Signory. He included in his design the great tower, one of the loveliest of all the towers of Florence, at that time the property of the Vacca family. Without and within the Palazzo Vecchio the history of Florence has been made, and many stirring events it witnessed — tumults, revolts, executions, and tortures, many and horrible. In 1378 the frightened Signoria, shut within the strong walls of their palace, capitulated to the people in the revolt of the "Ciompi," or Wooden-shoed, a name given in derision to these particular rebels, who belonged to the plebeian class. Triumphant, the "Ciompi" elected a wool-carder, by name Michele di Lando, who had carried the great banner of Justice in the tumult, to be Gonfaloniere and supreme in the Republic, which office he worthily filled for a time. The palace saw also the Duke of Athens acclaimed by the people; it served as a prison for Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ," and for Savonarola and his devoted friars. Later it became the palace of the Medici Pope, Clement VII., and of Cosimo, the first Grand-Duke, and his wife Eleanor of Toledo; and it was in honour of their son's wife, Joanna of Austria, that the courtyard was decorated as we see it to-day.

Out of compliment to the young Princess, the massive columns were wreathed with vine-tendrils and other ornaments in stucco; and the now half-obliterated frescoes on the walls and vaulting were painted, the subjects chosen from German history and from German towns, to remind the bride of her northern home. All the proportions of the courtyard are good, and make a charming frame for the beautiful little fountain in the middle. Who in Florence does not know and love Verrocchio's chubby winged boy, running away above a porphyry basin, with a small dolphin held tightly beneath his round fat arm? His flying feet seem scarce to touch the ground, and his curls are tossed by the breeze, while the gloom of the dark cortile is full of the charm of his bright presence.

The Municipal Council of Florence now holds its sittings in the great hall, and its various offices occupy the larger part of the vast building, through many rooms of which we wandered, overwhelmed by their powerful associations; but, though tempted to linger and dream in this history-haunted atmosphere, we left at length, and crossing the courtyard, walked down the steps which once formed the "Ringhiera," from whence the Signoria proclaimed their decrees to the people assembled on the Piazza

COURTYARD OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

Verrocchio's fountain stands in the centre, and through the open doorway a glimpse is obtained of the Loggia dei Lanzi.

PALAZZO VECCHIO
FIRENZE

in the old days, and walked across to the beautiful "Loggia dei Lanzi."

Here a wonderful group of statues is to be found, unrivalled in fine workmanship and design. First is the "Perseus" of Benvenuto Cellini, standing, with triumphant grace, above the prostrate Medusa, whose awful head he holds in one hand, while in the other he grasps his dripping sword. Not far from him is Donatello's "Judith," a fitting companion for the Greek hero—for she is heroic in her proportions, the great Deliverer of her people, carrying the head of Holofernes the tyrant. On the other side, passing once more the "Perseus," is John of Bologna's great marble group of the "Rape of the Sabines," which worthily completes this trio of noble works. From the Loggia the view of the Piazza is fine, and one can imagine the great games and fêtes held here in mediæval days, and also a little of the terror of Savonarola's martyrdom. In the pavement before the Palazzo Vecchio a memorial stone marks the spot where the three friars suffered on May 23, 1498; and on the anniversary of their execution fresh garlands may be seen lying upon it, brought by the people who still revere the memory of the great prior of San Marco and his two faithful monks.

To the north of the Piazza della Signoria lies the Via Calzaioli,—the very heart of Florence, full of associations with her ancient life, her guilds and her crafts, and the great families who distracted her with their feuds and party quarrels. In this street the Guelphic family of Adimari, and their Ghibelline foes, the Macci, had their houses, and close at hand lived the Cerchi and the Donati; and in Via Calzaioli the artists had their booths, and waited for their patrons to give orders or to inspect works of art. It is still one of the busiest of Florentine streets, narrow and always overcrowded; twice has it been widened, and still there does not seem to be room enough for all the people and all the vehicles perpetually going up and down. Some of the best shops in the town are established in these tall houses; so also are some of the most popular restaurants. Real Italian cooking is quite excellent: all the "paste" dishes, such as macaroni, spaghetti, and gniochi, are delicious, and the way in which the vegetables produced by the rich soil of Tuscany in such abundance are treated and prepared by an Italian cook would be a revelation to an English member of that profession.

Half-way down Via Calzaioli stands one of the most interesting of the Florentine churches, Or

San Michele. This curious prefix of "Or" has given rise to some speculation. It is supposed to be derived either from the Latin "hortus" (garden), as it is known that the church once stood in a garden, or "horium" (granary), after a neighbouring corn-market. In very ancient days the Lombards built a church where Or San Michele now stands, and dedicated it to their patron saint, the great Archangel; but as they allowed the building to fall into decay, the Signory ordained that it should be destroyed. Later, however, the Signory commissioned Arnolfo di Cambio to design a loggia to be erected on the site of the demolished church, in which they hung the much-venerated picture known as "Our Lady of Consolation." This fine work—supposed by some to be by Ugolino of Siena, and by others to be by Lorenzo Monaco — was afterwards removed to Orcagna's celebrated shrine, within the church. In 1304 the Signory began the present church, but destined it first for a granary, where foreign corn bought by them could be stored, and sold at a low price to the poor in years of famine. The Guild of Silk Merchants superintended the work of the building, and in time other guilds undertook to adorn the exterior of the church with

statues of their Patron Saints, and with their armorial bearings. It was thus that the fine statues we now see around the church, each within a richly decorated tabernacle, and the beautiful majolica coats of arms above them, came to be erected. Most of these statues are splendid specimens of fourteenth-century Florentine work, and represent the saintly patrons of the Guilds of Greater and Minor Arts to the number of fourteen. First came the Madonna and Child, now within the church, Patroness of physicians and apothecaries; then St. John the Evangelist, Patron of the silk merchants; St. James, of the furriers; St. Mark, of the flax merchants; St. Giles, of the farriers, blacksmiths, and workers in metals; St. Stephen, of the wool merchants; St. Matthew (who sat at the receipt of custom), of stockbrokers; and St. George, of the armourers. The four crowned martyrs—St. Claudius, St. Nicostratus, St. Sinfronius, and St. Castorius—are the Patrons of the carpenters and the masons; St. Philip is the Patron of the hosiers; St. Peter, of the butchers; St. Luke, of the men of law; St. Thomas, of the Chamber of Commerce; and St. John the Baptist, of the foreign wool merchants. Such a list shows how many and how rich were the ancient Guilds

of Florence, and the artists they employed were Donatello, Ghiberti, Verrocchio, John of Bologna, and Nanni di Banco, who, in artistic merit, ranks last. Among the finest of these statues and groups is Ghiberti's "St. John Baptist,"—an inspired figure, the Voice crying aloud in the wilderness, with matted hair and beard, his tunic of camel's hair folded round him. Verrocchio's group for the Chamber of Commerce, the doubting St. Thomas, thrusting his finger into the wound in our Lord's side, is also very fine; but the "St. George," by Donatello, is more beautiful still. He is represented as a youthful warrior, leaning on his shield, looking out with steadfast eyes, ready to go to battle and to death for his Master. But to-day Donatello's "St. George" is in the National Museum of the Bargello, and his niche contains only a good copy—for the Town Council very rightly removed the original statue when it was found to be showing signs of injury from atmospheric or other causes. Above the statues the round plaques displaying the armorial bearings of the different Guilds are among the finest work Luca della Robbia ever produced. Some are in high relief, others in low; the colour is delicate, and the coats of arms are surrounded by delicious garlands of fruit and foliage.

Besides these fine statues, and the attractive work of Luca which makes a patch of colour high up in the curious square church, there are the lovely windows to be admired, as beautiful as anything to be found in Florentine architecture of the period. They are finely designed, rich in delicate tracery and in ornament, supported on perfectly proportioned columns, and are the work of Francesco Talenti.

The interior of Or San Michele is dim. The sunlight penetrates but palely the dusky shadows, among which gleam the faded colours of vanishing frescoes adorning the pillars and walls. Passing St. Anne's altar, and the great marble group above it, where she is represented supporting Our Lady and the Divine Child, we come to the celebrated shrine, where we stand lost in admiration of the beauty of its form and conception. The Sienese master has depicted Our Lady of Consolation, holding on her knee our Lord, who grasps a goldfinch in a dimpled hand, the group surrounded by adoring angels, and Orcagna's tabernacle in which the picture is placed is carved with beautiful traceries, and has reliefs relating the history of Our Lady from her birth to her Assumption. The whole is enclosed within

a low marble screen, on which offerings of flowers lie, brought by rich and poor alike, fragrant tributes of Florentine love and devotion to the "Consolatrix Afflictorum," whose intercession saved their city from the Black Death in the fourteenth century.

Another much venerated object in Or San Michele is the crucifix before which St. Antonino the Archbishop prayed as a child. Living close by the original Loggia, the Saint in his boyhood was often seen kneeling absorbed in prayer before this crucifix, which stood on the altar, and it has been preserved ever since, as a precious relic.

Leaving the church by the west door, we found ourselves facing the ancient tower of the Guild of Foreign Wool Merchants,—venerable, rugged, and square, connected by a covered outside passage with the church in which those good old merchants doubtless heard Mass often and devoutly. To-day their hall is used by the Dante Society for learned conferences, in which the greatest scholars of the day take part, and remembering this, and that the poet was born close by, we moved away from Or San Michele and across the street in search of the quiet, shady, little piazzetta where the Alighieri family built

their houses, and where over a doorway a tablet records the fact of Dante's birth in that particular house. In a street close by stands the little old church of San Martino, where he married Gemma dei Donati; and which is also connected with St. Antonino.

It was in this church the Archbishop established a Confraternity to which was given the name of the "Buonomini di San Martino" (the good men of St. Martin), who undertook to seek out and assist people who had fallen from comfort into distress and poverty, through no fault of their own. In the wall of the church is still to be seen a slit, not unlike the slit in our modern post-boxes, with an inscription asking for alms for that philanthropic purpose,—the medium through which the charitable gave money to assist the "Buonomini di San Martino."

Close by the church of St. Martin is the ancient and at one time powerful Benedictine Abbey generally known as the "Badia." Its beautiful Campanile, lately restored, is of the fourteenth century, and is one of the most graceful of the lovely group of spires that watch over Florence. The Cloister, a delightful specimen of fourteenth-century architecture, is built round a small square,

in double arcades, one above the other, and is decorated with unimportant frescoes of the life of St. Benedict, and the most precious treasure remaining to the old Abbey church is a magnificent picture by Filippino Lippi, "The Vision of St. Bernard." The old legend which relates the life of the Saint dwells most particularly on his great devotion to the Mother of our Lord, and describes how, on one occasion, when St. Bernard was worn out with his labours, and suffering much from an illness, which caused him great difficulty in writing the sermons and books he composed in her honour, Our Lady appeared to him. Cheered and comforted by the heavenly vision, St. Bernard continued his work, refreshed and strengthened, and it is this scene that Filippino Lippi has painted, giving the world a Madonna of extreme beauty and sweetness, who bends towards the great Abbot with an expression of pity and tenderness, touching with her hand the written page open on his desk. She is accompanied by youthful angels, and on a rock in the background Filippino has written the Saint's fine motto: "Sustine et abstine" ("Bear and forbear").

Mino da Fiesole executed two fine tombs in the Badia, but the beautiful frescoes we read of in old chronicles which once adorned the walls,

frescoes by Giotto and Masaccio, have disappeared beneath the ruthless hand of the seventeenth-century "restorer." Opposite the west door of the Badia, with its double staircase, and fine terra-cotta lunette, stands the Bargello, once the residence of the Podesta, whose office was created in the thirteenth century. The Podesta was always a "foreigner," usually a noble from a neighbouring city, and therefore unbiassed, and free from partisan sympathies, which fitted him to be chief magistrate of Florence. He dwelt in the grim Bargello, which was also a prison containing horrible dungeons; and cells, from some of whose windows the Pazzi conspirators were hanged high in air. Now it is a store-house of treasures which it would take many a visit to learn by heart. For here may be seen marbles and bronzes by all the greatest Florentine masters—Pisanello's medals, Maestro Giorgio's pottery, and many beautiful works of the Della Robbia—preserved safe from harm. The fine courtyard, guarded by the traditional lion of Florence, known as Marzocco, is vaulted, arched, and decorated with statues and coats of arms, with an outside staircase leading up to the great hall, where Donatello's "St. George stands," while his counterfeit occupies his old niche outside Or

PIAZZA S. FIRENZE, FLORENCE

Showing the steps of the Church of S. Filippo Neri, the Bargello, the tower of the Badia, and the Cathedral cupola. To the right is the entrance to the Via del Proconsolo.

San Michele. The Bargello and the Badia stand just where the Via Proconsolo (the name is connected with a Republican office) leads into the Piazza San Firenze, the east side of which is almost entirely occupied by the big seventeenth-century church of St. Philip Neri, belonging to the fathers of his Oratory. On the south side the immense walls of the Palazzo Vecchio tower above the houses in the square; but we turned our backs upon it, and went forward towards the Via Proconsolo. A little antiquity shop at the angle attracted us, and we succumbed to an almost daily temptation, to enter and search among the heterogeneous mass of wares therein displayed for treasures really worth buying—treasures so rarely found, yet for ever sought.

V

THE CATHEDRAL SQUARE

V

THE CATHEDRAL SQUARE

THE north end of Via Calzaioli (street of the stocking-makers) opens on to the Piazza del Duomo, Ruskin's "history-haunted square," containing one of the most wonderful groups of buildings in the world, — wonderful even in Italy, the land of beauty and of wonder. The group is composed of the Cathedral, the Campanile or belfry, and the Baptistery of Florence.

But before these great monuments are reached, two of the most interesting, characteristic, and ancient Florentine institutions, which should be noticed, are passed as the Via Calzaioli is left and the Piazza entered. These are the Arch-Confraternity of the Brothers of Mercy, known as "The Misericordia," and the hospital of the Gallo Bianco, or White Cock,—condensed into the short name of "Bigallo." The Bigallo is

a hospital for the reception of orphans, and its little Loggia, by an unknown architect of the fourteenth century, is one of the most beautiful things in Florence. Behind the fine wrought-iron gates which open into Via Calzaioli is a small chapel enclosing a much venerated picture, admission to see which is very difficult, very rarely to be obtained, and then only as a great privilege.

Facing the Bigallo, across the street, is the Oratory of the Brothers of Mercy, a plain unpretentious building outside, the chief feature of which is a large clock. Inside, also, there is nothing of special interest apart from the robing-room of the Brothers, in which a litter is always waiting, and the familiar black habits ready to be assumed when the call, by telephone instead of by the great bell, as in times past, summons the Brothers on duty to their pious work of succouring the sick and carrying the dead to burial.

There are few travellers, even the veriest bird-of-passage, who are not familiar with the small, black-robed processions so frequently met with on their way through the narrow streets, or swinging across the great open squares, to which every hat is lifted, be the wearer a prince or a street-

sweeper. Shoulder-high the Brethren carry their curtained litter, and behind it trudge the relieving party, small or large, in proportion to the distance the burden has to be borne, which burden they in their turn will take up in "God's Name." If the burden should be a corpse, one Brother walks ahead, carrying a lighted torch, such as are the torches carried by them in the characteristic funeral processions, which in Florence are always incidents of the twilight. To meet one of these is an impressive and solemn experience. The priest, with crucifix and lights, leads the way, repeating the psalm "De profundis," to which the Brothers of Mercy respond, as they follow, some carrying the bier, others encircling it, holding in their hands great flaring torches. Relations, also bearing torches, walk slowly behind, following their dead to the church, where, next day, they will assemble for the burial, surrounded by no pomp of woe, but with a simplicity at once touching and exemplary.

Besides these public acts of mercy, the Brethren are engaged in attending to the sick and the infirm in their own houses; they give money to invalids, and great quantities of bread to the poor; they have the privilege of providing first

aid in cases of street accident, so that the injured cannot be removed until the Misericordia carry them away, which, arriving on the spot with marvellous rapidity, they do with all good-will.

The spirit of the Brothers of Mercy has spread to the small towns and villages in Tuscany, most of which possess some society of the sort; but should any desire to bring a sick person to one of the Florentine hospitals, they cannot carry him beyond the city gate, where the Florentine Brethren meet them and take charge of the sufferer. The Misericordia of Fiesole is, however, an exception to this rule, enjoying the high privilege of carrying their sick through Florence to the hospital door.

This wonderful Confraternity of Mercy had its origin in the simple piety of a poor street porter of Florence, one Pietro Borsi, in the year 1240. In those days the street porters were a very rough lot, and while waiting for jobs met in a low tavern near the Duomo, where they gambled and drank, uttering the vilest blasphemies, and wasting their hard-earned wages. Made miserable by the daily spectacle of their moral degradation, Pietro Borsi set about endeavouring to improve their condition. Winning a few to his side, he suggested

that a small fine should be imposed on those whose blasphemies so polluted the ears of their comrades. The scheme succeeded. The fines accumulated until there was collected quite a respectable sum of money, with which, at Pietro's suggestion, a litter was purchased, and the porters, in their spare hours, began to seek out and to carry the sick poor to the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova.

At first the litter was painted red, as were, later, when the Confraternity was organised, the habits of the Brethren; but by and by this was changed to black,—the familiar black of to-day, with the curious pointed hood concealing the face from the patient lying inside the bed-like litter. Not only must the sick person remain in ignorance of the name and rank of the Brethren carrying him, but the latter are positively forbidden to accept any money whatever. All they may receive is a "cup of cold water."

From the King of Italy to the humblest citizen of Florence, gentle and simple, rich and poor alike, all are eligible for the Arch-Confraternity of Mercy, and cheerfully take their turn of duty, waiting at their Oratory for the summons which comes so often for their aid; but Brothers whose daily work

for bread seriously interferes with their attendance pay a small sum of money instead.

The Arch-Confraternity keep the 20th of January—their patron saint Sebastian's day—as a great festival, in which the whole city participates; and very special cakes are sold all day long to the crowds who throng the little chapel, from stalls set up outside the Oratory,—for does not every Florentine family give at least one of its members to the Arch-Confraternity of Mercy, which is so peculiarly their own, and is lived in their very lives?

The Oratory of the Confraternity of Mercy directly faces the celebrated Campanile of Florence, which has been described so often and by so many great writers and poets, but by none so sympathetically, or so appropriately, as by Ruskin. He calls it "that serene height of mountain alabaster, coloured like a morning cloud, and chased like a sea-shell." This description, fairy-like in its similes, intangible and delicate, seems exactly to suit the "Shepherd's Tower." The beauty of it seems to sink into the very soul as day by day one learns to know it more, and to mark with ever-increasing delight the exquisite tracery of the windows, and their slender, twisted,

supporting columns; the many-coloured marbles, running from purest white to crimson and green and onyx; the fine medallions of Luca above the solid base, and the perfect composition and proportion of his figures, so well placed in the limited spaces apportioned to them. Above these medallions stand serene and beautiful statues gazing upon the square with everlasting unseeing eyes, that could tell so much were it possible: and slowly, little by little, one learns to realise that each and every part of the perfect whole represents some of the greatest work of the master minds of that golden age in which the Tower was born. Giotto was the designer; Andrea Pisano, Francesco Talenti, Luca della Robbia, and Donatello the beautifiers, —the men who carried on and completed the thought of the peasant genius in whose brain and heart the belfry lived long ere men saw and marvelled at its magic loveliness. The Campanile stands in this year of our Lord as it stood when completed in that far-off fourteenth century, to the genius of which Florence owes its conception and execution. Faithfully the bells call men daily to Mass and Vespers, and give the signal for the "Ave Maria" to all the other city towers thrice daily. Through the generations it fulfils its task

in the pale dawn of winter, and in the blazing summer-noon, when the pavement burns beneath the hurrying feet of the people on the square, and the sky is like pitiless brass above their heads, and in the glowing crimson and gold and amethyst of an autumn sunset—palpably linking the past ages with our Florence of to-day.

Hardly separated from the Campanile stands the beautiful Cathedral, dedicated to "Our Lady of the Flower,"—the "flower" being the lily on the city shield. Arnolfo di Lapo designed the church, and Brunelleschi built the cupola; but the existing façade—for there have been three—is very modern. Designed by De Fabris and finished in the year 1887, it is not unworthy to complete the vast design of the greater master.

The Duomo, or Cathedral, is crowned by the great red-tiled cupola, and is decorated with magnificent carvings and statues, and inlaid with coloured marble. The four lesser doors are all different, and all beautiful. The Porta della Mandorla is perhaps the loveliest, as it is the richest in ornament and fancy. Its carved columns are garlanded with fruit and foliage, and support the door, above which the warm colour of a mosaic represents the Annunciation, in a lunette. Above this, again, is

a delightful carving representing Our Lady giving her girdle to St. Thomas, which completes the wonderful whole.

The interior strikes many people as being dull and gloomy, and particularly bare, when compared with the coloured dimness of Santa Maria Novella and the sunny depths of Santa Croce. But to others Santa Maria del Fiore conveys an impression of repose and devotion in the quiet of her vast spaces; and one feels in it, too, a curious sense of "aloofness," which the bareness and tranquillity of the great nave produce after the bustling piazza without, where the tram-bells ring and the whips crack all day long.

Two fine figures painted in *grisaille*, on either side the west door, attract one's attention first. They represent Sir John Hawkwood, the great English condottiere—called by the Italians "Giovanni Aguto"—who fought for the Republic in critical times, painted by Paolo Uccello, and a fellow-soldier of fortune, Niccolo da Tolentino, painted by Andrea del Castagno. They sit their horses perpetually guarding the great doors,—looking down from which one is filled with a sense of an ever-brooding greyness, dissipated only by the pale tints of blue and pink and green where

the light falling from the windows makes faint patterns on the marble floor.

The chapels in the transepts have the same dim, grey character, pierced only by candle-flames (many candles are always burning at Our Lady's Altar), and by the lamps lighted before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of St. Zanobius, where Ghiberti's magnificent silver shrine can be admired.

Above the doors of the two sacristies are two very lovely terra-cotta lunettes by Luca della Robbia, showing the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, their pale blues and greens and pearly white shining softly out from the grey walls. And the two sacristy doors also are partly Luca's work, and are carved with delightful heads of angels. Above them are two galleries, simple and ineffective, that have taken the place of the beautiful "cantorie" carved for the Cathedral by Luca della Robbia and Donatello, which are now in the Opera del' Duomo, the Museum, hard by.

Pausing for a moment beneath the cupola, one sees the fine effect of the great upspringing arches, the height of the roof, and the span of the lofty dome that seems to soar upward into far-off spaces of light and shade, in no way

INTERIOR OF THE CATHEDRAL OF SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE

A Lenten sermon is being preached beneath the great curtain suspended above the pulpit at this season.

influenced by Vasari's half-effaced, cloudy frescoes. And the scattered worshippers, the yellow candle-flames, and an occasional glimpse of a purple-clad canon, or of a priest with a touch of red where his white alb is fastened on his breast, all combine to make a picture which gives the impression that Santa Maria del Fiore offers the weary rest and a prayerful peace in the heart of the city's work and turmoil.

Impressions can be very strong, and they stand for a great deal in the chambers of memory, where, half unconsciously, we store so much that influences us when we recall places and people in after days. And this is why the venerable Church of St. John Baptist, the Baptistery of Florence, leaves on the mind an impression of the beginning of life and of the existence of a great tradition that knits Florence and her citizens irrevocably with the past. Here, where the children born to-day are carried to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, all the Florentines of the past—many of whose names we now know to be immortal—have been made Christians, and were received, perhaps, when their mothers carried them to the Font, by some such benign-looking old priest as he who to-day sits and waits for the swaddled babies, their bands hidden by very straight short

frocks, brought to him to be made children of Holy Church.

Somehow, one forgets to gaze at the mosaics with which the lovely circular church is lined, to examine the carvings on the tomb of the anti-Pope, John XXIII., or to catch the breath, as one might well do, with a thrill of horror inspired by Donatello's terrible ascetic "St Mary Magdalene," with all that human interest clustering round the font. The touching little family groups patiently await their turn to approach and present "the baby" to the priest, first unwrapping the folds of the traditional white-and-gold baptismal cloth thrown over each child, which is in beauty of texture and broidery finer or simpler according to the parents' station in life. The good priest takes the infants in his arms with unwearied patience; while above his bowed figure the great bronze statue of the Baptist, the city's holy patron, raises his hand in blessing, — a blessing which seems silently to reach the infant Florentines as their mothers carry them out of the dark old church into the sunlight beyond the door.

A STUDY OF THE OLD HOUSES IN BORGO S. JACOPO, FROM THE ARNO, LOOKING WEST

On the right of the picture are the Ponte Santa Trinità, and the dome of San Frediano. A grey winter day.

VI

THREE CHURCHES AND A PALACE

VI

THREE CHURCHES AND A PALACE

Borgo San Lorenzo is one of the narrowest, noisiest, and most used of all the Florence streets. It turns out of the Cathedral Square, and leads into the piazza of the same name, on which stands Brunelleschi's great Church of S. Lorenzo, with the noble lines of its rough brick front bearing the deep indentures of ancient scaffoldings; and beside it is the famous Laurentian Library, in whose sunny green cloister the stray cats of the city flock to be fed,—a fund for that purpose having been bequeathed by a citizen.

The cloisters of S. Lorenzo, like the church, are from designs by Brunelleschi; but the great library, full of priceless volumes, was designed by Michelangelo, and was a bequest made by the great Medici, Pope Leo X., to his native town. It was originally purchased by Cosimo the elder,

and left by Lorenzo il Magnifico to his son Giovanni, who became Pope, and removed the books from Florence to his villa in Rome, the famous Villa Medici, now the French Academy. On his death Cosimo's priceless codices and fine illuminated missals were returned, along with a request to the Pope's cousin Clement VII., then still Cardinal Giulio, that a suitable building should be provided for the preservation of the books, which condition, with the assistance of Michelangelo, was faithfully carried out, Florence once more becoming possessed of the famous library, which has never since been removed.

San Lorenzo is peculiarly the church of the Medici, who, with seven other noble Florentine families, originally founded it; for they nearly all lie buried within its walls. Before the great high altar, which is approached by a fine nave supported on great marble columns, a porphyry slab in the pavement covers the resting-place of Cosimo the elder, "Pater Patriæ." In the "Old Sacristy" a marble sarcophagus, carved by Donatello, holds the remains of Giovanni and Piccarda, his father and mother; close to them rest his two sons, Giovanni, whose early death broke the old man's heart, and "Piero il Gottoso," who succeeded him.

In the year 1524 Cardinal Giulio, afterwards Pope Clement VII., employed Michelangelo to build another chapel in San Lorenzo, now known as the "New Sacristy," which he hoped to make a mausoleum for his race. In this chapel stand Michelangelo's great unfinished tombs, so often described, with the splendid colossal statues of Night and Morning, Twilight and Dawn, which he designed as monuments for Lorenzo and Giovanni dei Medici, the father and uncle of Queen Catherine of France; while in the first chamber Lorenzo il Magnifico and Giuliano (his murdered brother) sleep in simpler tombs, made when the Grand-duke Cosimo I. translated their bodies hither.

The Piazza San Lorenzo always presents an animated scene. It is full of life and movement, and is both picturesque and characteristic. On its uneven pavement are erected many small wooden stalls, on which are to be found most, if not all, useful domestic objects and household necessities, as well as ribbons, lace, and picture post-cards.

To the north of the piazza, on a high pedestal, sits Giovanni delle Bande Nere, in the harness of a Roman governor, a weak statue by Bandinelli; and behind him rises the fine palace of the Marchese della Stufa, crowned by a deep shaded loggia, and

containing one great treasure, a magnificent coat of arms, a so-called "tondo," attributed to Luca della Robbia.

The palace on the east side, opposite the façade of the church,—which happily up to the present time has escaped restoration and the fate of Sta. Croce,—is occupied on the ground floor by a merchant of ready-made clothes, whose varied goods, military and other, gracefully sway with the breeze over the long front of his picturesque establishment. From this corner runs a narrow street, interesting as being a market for second-hand books. The dealers' stalls have stood here many years, as well as in the Piazza; and from one of the latter, near the statue of "John of the Black Bands," Browning tells us he bought the old chronicle which inspired his poem "The Ring and the Book."

The great Riccardi Palace forms one side of this little street. This imposing pile has graceful windows and deep cornices, with fine shields, bearing no longer the Medici balls, but the key of its later owners, the Riccardi family. The noble courtyard is most striking, and through it access is gained to the jewel for which the palace is so fitting a casket—the little chapel decorated for the Medici by Benozzo Gozzoli, with frescoes representing the

PIAZZA S. LORENZO, WITH THE STATUE OF GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE

In bright noon-day sunlight.

S·LORENZO·FIRENZE·

kings of the East on their journey to Bethlehem. "We have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore him." This is the key-note chosen by the great master when he designed the wonderful train which winds its way among all beautiful things—birds and gentle wild creatures, flowers, trees, and running streams—through an enchanted land leading to their goal. The old King Gaspard, riding first, is closely followed by Melchior, a monarch in the prime of life. Their figures and faces were painted from portraits of the Patriarch of Constantinople and of John Paleologus, last Emperor of the East, both visitors to Florence twenty years before, during the great Church Council. Behind them rides the young King Balthazar, surrounded by attendants, a splendid youth, wearing the features of Lorenzo the Magnificent himself, who gazes out into the world with clear boyish eyes. But, alas! the end of the kings' long journey is lost to us; its place has been usurped by an ugly, disfiguring window. Happily, however, the wonderful groups of worshipping angels, crowding in holy haste about the lowly stable, still remain to give an idea of the complete beauty of the little chapel, as it must have appeared in its first freshness, its untouched loveliness, when the Medici came to worship in it.

A few hundred yards away from the Riccardi Palace the street, widening, enters the square of San Marco, where the memory of a personality very different from any Medici seems strangely vivid and alive. Facing up the Via Cavour is the tall, narrow, rococo façade of what was once Savonarola's church; and, stretching away to the right, the long cream-coloured convent of which he was Prior.

In imagination one can see, as history has described, bands of white-robed children, the Friar's messengers, streaming down the church steps, singing hymns, on their way to exhort the people to repentance, penance, and a new life; or the black-and-white figure of the great Prior himself, with strong features and piercing eyes, coming out of the convent door. Or the scene changes: there is a fierce rabble beating against the closed doors of the church; there are groans and shrieks and bloodshed; and by and by Fra Girolamo leaves the convent for the last time. Beside him walk the shrinking Fra Silvestro and the inspired Fra Domenico, on their way to torture and to martyrdom.

Quite different, in the spring sunshine to-day, looks the modern Piazza, with carefully tended garden, a stand where military bands play for the

amusement of the people on fine Sundays and feast days, with newspaper kiosks and fruit-stalls. Unconcerned crowds come and go, passing through the busy modern streets which cover the space where once the great gardens of the Medici bloomed. The convent is now the "Museum of St. Marco," and the property of the nation. No longer does a monastic calm brood over the flowery Cloisters, the great library, and the little white cells. All day long visitors pass through the deserted convent, some full of sympathy with the spirit of the place, cherishing the same faith that inspired the heart and brain of Fra Angelico and Fra Girolamo, over whose carefully preserved relics they reverently bend. Others come full of enthusiasm for the art of the spiritual painter who has left each cell a separate shrine of beauty and colour; others, again, visiting the place out of curiosity, and because it is recommended in the guide-books.

To the lover of Fra Angelico's work San Marco presents an almost colossal spectacle, the fruit of laborious years, due to the spiritual inspirations of one poor monk, whose genius is unsurpassed, in its peculiar religious quality, by any other master. In the cells occupied by the friars Fra Angelico painted some of his finest frescoes, and

in the Refectory one of his greatest compositions, that of the Crucifixion, with groups of saints surrounding the Cross. That most of these frescoes are still in a good state of preservation is fortunate for the student of art who desires to devote his time to the study of this unrivalled master.

The little street which leads from the Piazza S. Marco to the Piazza dell' Annunziata passes close to the Academy of Fine Arts, in the Via Ricasoli,—the gallery in which hang Botticelli's great allegory of "Spring"; his "Coronation of Our Lady," with its lovely ring of flying angels; and many beautiful works by Lippo Lippi and other great masters. One room is devoted to the works of Fra Angelico, and in the long entrance corridor Michelangelo's statue, his "David," with sling in hand, stands alone—a giant figure, unfortunately somewhat dwarfed by being beneath a roof and enclosed by walls.

The church of the Santissima Annunziata is not so interesting artistically as it is religiously. There are two reasons which make it a great centre of Florentine devotion. The faithful venerate in the Santissima Annunziata a miraculous picture preserved in the great shrine; and

the church belongs to an Order whose origin is purely Florentine, the Servites, or "Servants of Mary." This Order was founded in 1233 by seven young men, who met every evening to unite in devotions to Our Lady in the ancient church of Sta. Reparata, then occupying the site of the present Cathedral, until, finding that their piety was attracting the attention of the citizens, they forsook the world, retiring into the deserts of Monte Senario, beyond the Mugnone Valley. There they spent the remainder of their lives in fasting, penance, and prayer, and in organising their society, which has since spread all over the world. The Monastery on Monte Senario, occupying the spot where the rude huts of the "Seven Holy Founders" once stood, lies in a very beautiful position, and the road leading to it is one of the loveliest in the country about Florence.

Santissima Annunziata is approached through a Portico and "cortile" (courtyard), built in the fifteenth century by Piero dei Medici the elder, son of Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ." Under the Portico stand little booths, owned by women who offer for sale rosaries and scapulars, little books of devotion, and coarse reproductions of the miraculous

picture within, for which also they provide "blessed candles," to be lighted at the shrine, which, through the offerings of the faithful, is always a blaze of light, and sweet with the fading perfume of bridal bouquets often brought by Florentine brides and laid at Our Lady's feet.

The walls of the Cloister, which run round three sides of the inner cortile, are decorated with frescoes by Rosselli and Andrea del Sarto, all now protected by glass. Above the door leading into the court is a mosaic of the Annunciation by Ghirlandaio, while immediately facing this entrance, by the church door, is a very beautiful fresco of the Nativity by that great Florentine master, Alessio Baldovinetti. The magnificent shrine, object of so many pilgrimages and such warm devotion, is on the left as one enters the church, with the picture veiled above the altar. The legend concerning it is very simple and beautiful. It recounts how a Painter Monk in the fifteenth century was encouraged to make a picture of the Annunciation of Our Lady, which he duly began. The monk, however, in his humility, was overcome by a sense of his unworthiness to portray the Blessed Virgin. He dared not proceed with his task; but "He who exalteth the humble" sent an angel to assist the

good father, who, awaking one morning, found his picture completed. The fame of the miracle spread far and wide, and with great solemnity the picture was carried to the magnificent shrine prepared for it in the church of the Santissima Annunziata, from Michelozzo's designs, by command of "Piero il Gottoso," and from that time succeeding grand-dukes and rich citizens of Florence have more and more lavishly adorned it. Fine iron gates enclose the shrine, above which great silver lamps perpetually burn, while rich and poor alike kneel around on the pavement, or on the altar steps, undisturbed by the passing crowds.

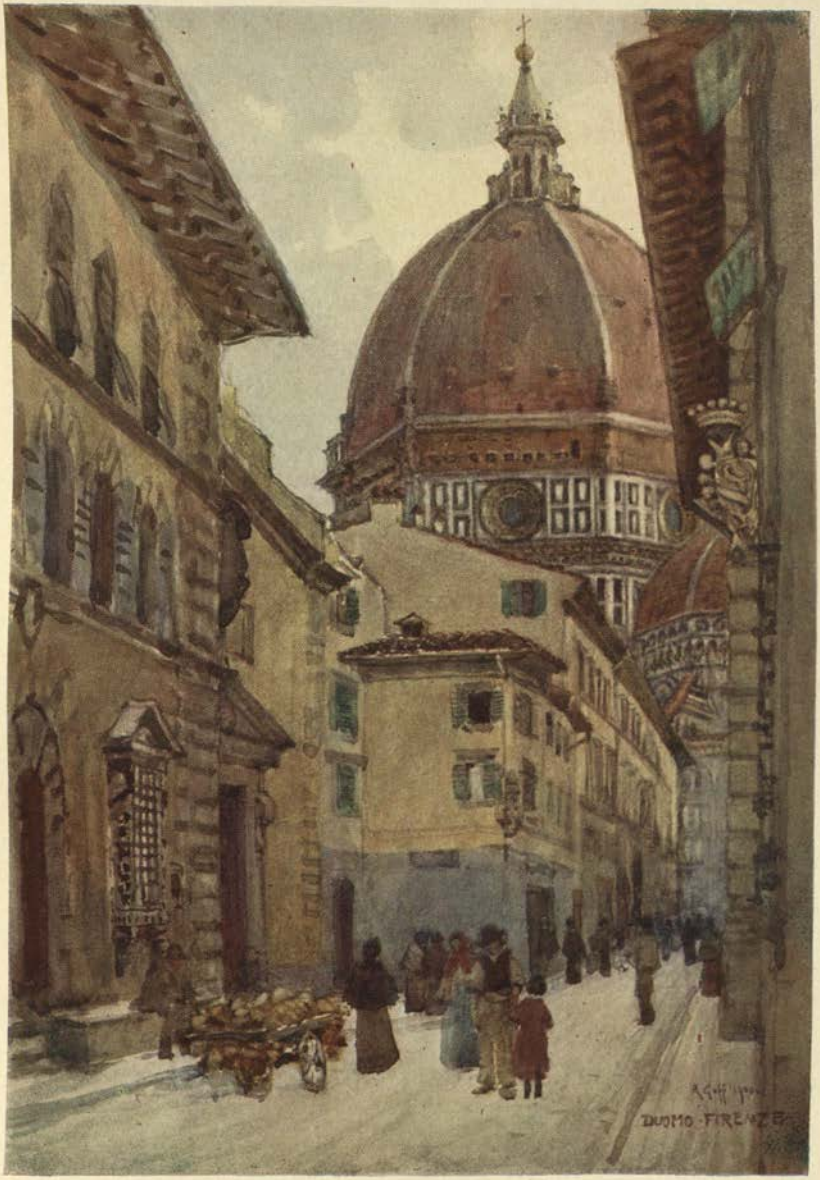
There is little more of interest in the Santissima Annunziata, save two delightful little Renaissance organ galleries and some few pictures; and one can leave the church by a side door, above which Andrea del Sarto painted his Madonna known as "Del Sacco," going from thence into the larger Cloister, and so to the Piazza.

The most interesting feature of this fine square is undoubtedly the great Hospital for Foundlings, called "Of the Holy Innocents," occupying the whole of the east side. It is approached by a flight of steps, and by a Loggia decorated with a series of medallions in blue and white terra-cotta ware,

by Andrea della Robbia, each representing an enchanting swaddled baby. The soft round faces of the infants wear pathetically helpless expressions. Each is different, and each beautiful; all alike are very simple in treatment, and stand out from a background of fine blue glaze. The hospital, designed by Brunelleschi in 1421, contains a fine courtyard, in the left-hand corner of which is the chapel. Over its door is a fine lunette of the Annunciation, by Andrea della Robbia; and within, over the High Altar, is a beautiful Adoration of the Magi, by Domenico Ghirlandaio. The hospital also possesses a small picture gallery, and may be visited by strangers; the kind Sisters of Charity who are in charge conduct visitors through it, delighted to show the spacious wards where their small charges are so carefully tended, looking exactly like the swaddled babies of Andrea in the spandrils of the Loggia arches. Opposite this hospital is a long building resembling it architecturally, but without the terra-cottas; and in the middle of the Piazza are two "grotesque" fountains, and a fine equestrian statue of the Grand-duke Ferdinand I., by John of Bologna. At the corner of the Via dei Servi, opposite the church, a florist's shop lends a note of colour to this gloomy street, down which

VIA DEI SERVI

The narrow thoroughfare leading from the Piazza del Duomo to the Piazza dell' Annunziata, with palaces on either hand.


DUOMO FIRENZE

the tram passes between dark old palaces, their façades forming a vista which frames the Cathedral cupola quite magnificently, the great dome standing boldly out, rising solemn, vast, and almost isolated.

To the north of the Piazza dell' Annunziata runs the Via Gino Capponi, and mid-way down it stands, in a garden, one of the finest of Florentine palaces. It is the palace of the Dukes San-Clemente, and was the home of the Pretender, Prince Charles Edward, and his wife during the years they resided in Florence. Above one of its twin towers a weather-cock turns to the wind, and pierced through the small metal banner on the vane are the initials "C. R."—Carolus Rex. The two significant letters seem graven upon the blue Italian sky for a perpetual memorial of the empty life, mocked by dreams, which destroyed poor Prince Charlie, now peacefully resting, after the disappointments, the weaknesses, the out-lived friendships, and unprincely shifts of his life, beneath the great dome of St. Peter's in Rome.

VII

ACROSS THE PONTE VECCHIO

THE "MERCATO NUOVO" IN 1884

As it was before the demolition of the Ghetto and widening of the adjoining streets.

VII

ACROSS THE PONTE VECCHIO

HORACE WALPOLE, writing in 1740, thus describes his quarters in Florence: "I am lodged with Mr. Mann [then Minister from the Court of St. James to the Grand-duke of Tuscany], the best of creatures. I have a terrace all to myself, with an open gallery on the Arno. Over against me is the famous gallery, and on either hand two fair bridges."

It is difficult now to locate the house in which Sir Horace Walpole stayed with his namesake, Sir Horace Mann. Probably it was one of the old houses still standing opposite to the Uffizi Palace, or one of the many between the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte alle Grazie—since pulled down to make room for modern buildings. The huge parallelogram built by Vasari for Cosimo I. remains unchanged. The strange, narrow length

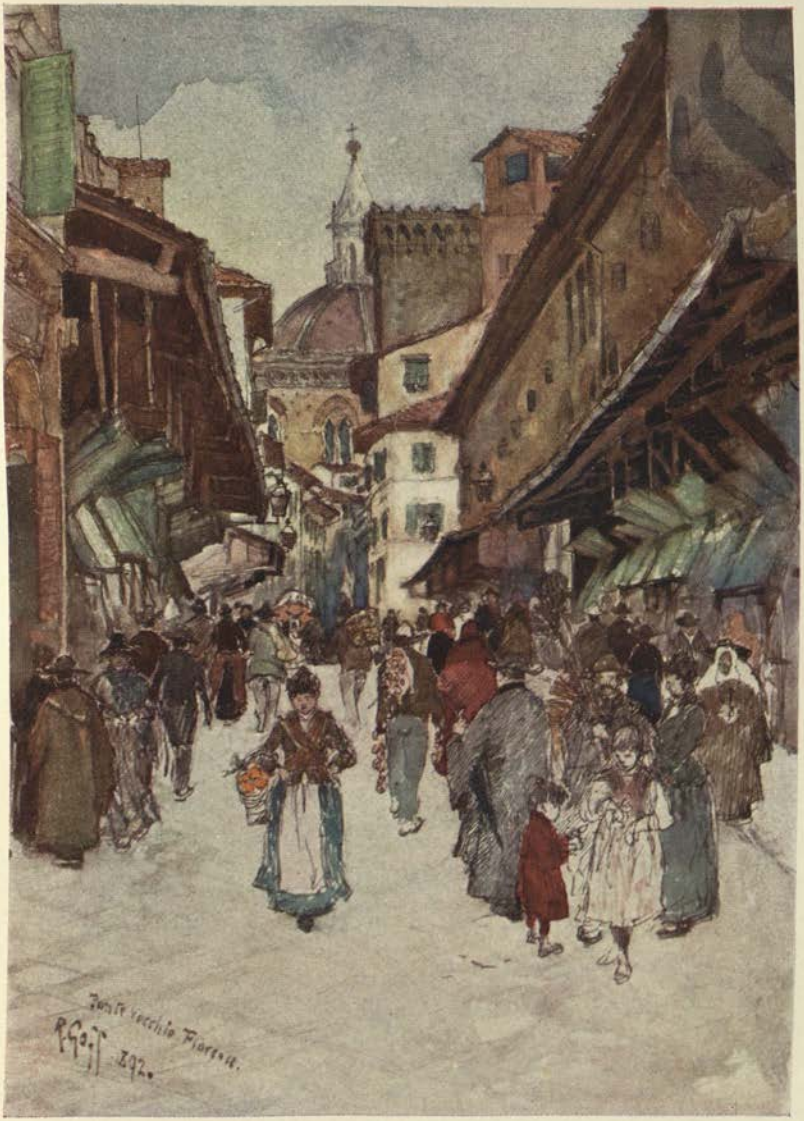
of it (ending in a Loggia jutting out to the river, looking back from which a stunted view is obtained of the Palazzo Vecchio), with the little booths and stalls beneath the arcades, must to-day all be pretty nearly what they were in the eighteenth century.

The collection in the Uffizi Palace—begun by the Grand-duke Francis, son of Cosimo II.—is one of the most famous in the world, and, in addition to the pictures, includes gems, drawings, and prints of untold value. The archives and the National Library are also lodged in this building.

Many of the oldest streets in Florence are round about the Uffizi Palace—the Borgo Santi Apostoli, the Via delle Carozze, Via Por Santa Maria, with the Mercato Nuovo and the Lung' Arno degli Archibusieri. The last-mentioned is reputed to be the oldest street in the town. It faces a colonnade built on the river embankment, above which runs the covered gallery whence the grand-dukes once obtained access to the Uffizi from the Pitti Palace. This, again, is the work of Vasari, and runs across the river above the small shops on the eastern side of the Ponte Vecchio. Now the Ponte Vecchio with its delightful little shops is

THE PONTE VECCHIO

Looking across the Ponte Vecchio from south side of the Arno, with a distant view of the Duomo, and showing the passage connecting the Pitti and Uffizi Palaces on the right, and jewellers' shops below.


Ponte vecchio Florence.
1892.

one of those unique and delightful bits of architecture which give character to any town; and it is as celebrated all the world over as the Duomo, or the Campanile, or any other of the churches or palaces in Florence. The Grand-duke Cosimo I., in the sixteenth century, gave permission to the jewellers and goldsmiths of the city to build their shops on this bridge; and one of the merchants of that day, who sold his wares here, became his sovereign's father-in-law — the old Martelli, whose daughter Camilla was Cosimo's second wife.

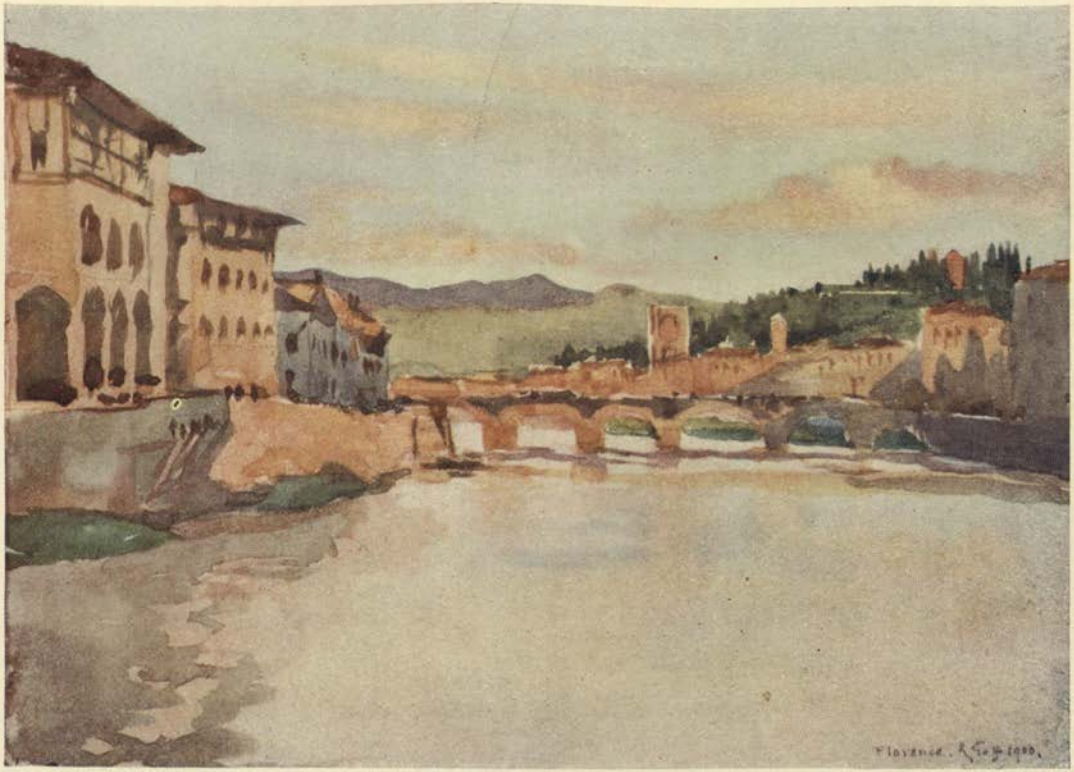
The tradition of the sixteenth century continues to this day. The Ponte Vecchio is still lined by two rows of picturesque jewellers' shops, with green shutters drawn up and half suspended in air, their walls painted in every colour under heaven. Midway across the bridge, and through a gap left free of shops, one has a lovely view up and down the river. To the west the long line of the Arno stretches away on either hand. The left bank is bordered by the picturesque backs of the houses in Borgo S. Jacopo, a jumble of colour and quaint form, with their foundations bathed by the river, and above their heads the delicate rose-red tower of the little church of S. Jacopo; while, completing the line, the fine Frescobaldi Palace joins the bridge

of Santa Trinita, with its four white statues guarding the four corners standing out sharply in the clear atmosphere. Farther down Santo Spirito shows its dome and belfry; close beside it rises the perfect little cupola of San Frediano, even more beautiful than the more important dome of the Holy Spirit, both works of Brunelleschi's genius.

On the right bank stretches a long line of palaces. Chief among these are the two towering and battlemented buildings on either side of the entrance to Via Tornabuoni, which were the palaces of the Ferroni and Masetti families, and in one of which lived the Countess of Albany and the poet Alfieri. A near neighbour is the great Corsini Palace, crowned with statues; beyond it are the palaces of the exiled Buonapartes and of Mme. Favart—old-world dwellings, past which the carriages roll along the broad new embankment on their way to the leafy Cascine, where, wrapped in a certain well-known red shawl, the young Pretender's widow walked every morning in her later years.

Cross over, and look at the smiling landscape up-river. The valley of the Arno is nearer, and buildings are fewer; there are curious old houses

VIEW LOOKING EAST FROM THE PONTE VECCHIO AT SUNSET, WITH THE HILL OF S. MINIATO, AND THE PONTE ALLE GRAZIE


Florence. R. Gay 1900.

(resembling those below the bridge), which form the back of the Via de' Bardi, carrying the mind away to *Romola* and George Eliot. Above them rises the wooded hill of San Miniato, with at its feet the last remaining tower of Michelangelo's fortifications left standing, isolated, but strong with the strength of an ancient race.

Up the valley the orchards come down to the river bank, and are all abloom with cherry and peach blossom; and among them are fair white villas and the slender towers of village churches climbing up the green hill-slopes. Above them all is the bare hill of the Incontro, crowned with a white convent; and behind, towering still higher, rise the lower slopes of the Apennines, their snowy peaks veiled in cloud, while, like a patch of light on the blue and purple of the mountain-side, lies Vallombrosa. Beneath the clear winter sun, or bathed in the golden glory of a spring evening, this landscape, framed in the arches of the Ponte Vecchio, is a never-failing wonder to the lover of beauty. It seems to meet one with a serene air of peace which would fain hide the fact that where one stands is the middle of a busy town, and that there —running along the Lung' Arno and across the Ponte alle Grazie, from which all the little hermit-

ages were long ago swept away—is an electric tramway, the sign-manual of twentieth-century progress. Turn back to the bridge, and you may watch the whole life of Florence passing by in an endless procession of lumbering omnibuses, carriages, cabs, hand-barrows, and market-carts. Here are "forestieri" intent upon the shops, generally conversing in the Anglo-Saxon or in the Teuton tongue; little blue soldiers, sometimes wearing quaint helmets that remind one of ancient Roman statues, and sometimes the drooping cock-feathers of the Bersaglieri. Now a Dominican friar passes by, or two Franciscan nuns, wearing enormous flat straw hats; a group of graceful Tuscan girls come swinging along, walking with linked arms, perhaps four in a row, their hair carefully dressed, and wearing skirts and aprons of some bright hue—often red, for is not red a lucky colour, defeating the malice of the evil eye? In their doorways stand the jewellers, on the look-out for customers or a little conversation with friends.

Vasari's brown-roofed gallery crosses the Ponte Vecchio, and follows the Roman Road until it reaches its goal, which is the Pitti Palace. This huge pile of buildings—designed by Brunelleschi and Michelozzo—is declared by authorities to be

STUDY, SHOWING THE EAST SIDE OF THE PONTE VECCHIO AND THE OLD HOUSES OF THE VIA DE' BARDI

very fine. It was originally begun by a citizen of Florence—Luca Pitti by name, a man of wealth and boundless ambition, who desired to rival the Medici themselves, and to equal their importance in the State. He failed, however, as all did who crossed the path of that wonderful and unscrupulous race, and died in dishonoured obscurity. His descendants in the sixteenth century sold his immense palace—then still unfinished—to Eleanor of Toledo, the wife of the Grand-duke Cosimo I., and from that time the Pitti Palace has always been a royal residence. The Medici grand-dukes, and the Lorraine princes inhabited it in turn, and now the kings of the House of Savoy occupy it when they come to Florence.

The gorgeously decorated rooms which contain the works of art in the Pitti Palace are full of beautiful things. Besides the fine gallery of pictures there is the magnificent collection of Benvenuto Cellini's work, and rich stores of ancient tapestries that were used throughout Italy by the great families in mediæval times to decorate their houses within and without on festival occasions. Fine specimens of these Tapestries are also to be seen in the Accademia and in the Museum.

Behind the Pitti Palace stretch the well-known

63982

Boboli Gardens, encircled by the old city walls—delicious haunts of restful shade, where quaint grottoes are to be found, and "Belvederi," and all the old-world charm and fragrance that float about an Italian garden, which linger in the memory of the fortunate ones who have learned to know and love the Gardens of Italy.

Opposite the Pitti, and before you reach the great gate leading into the Boboli Gardens, stands a fine old palace, with quaint balconies and green shutters, which few English or American men and women can pass without a pang of memory,—for this is Casa Guidi. The palace overlooks a church, across the street, standing a little back from the road, which is dedicated to S. Felice,—surely a name of happy augury for the poetess of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, who found her happiness within the walls of the old Florentine Palace. The narrow street that runs "'twixt church and palace" leads into the fine square of Santo Spirito, planted with palms and other green trees, the simple façade of Brunelleschi's great church raised on a flight of steps, forming the northern side of the Piazza. The interior of Santo Spirito is, in its style, as fine as any church in Florence. Built in basilica form, the finely-

proportioned broad nave is supported by massive columns, and leads up to the high altar, which is placed in the centre of the apse immediately under the dome, and surmounted by a baldacchino in the rococo style of the seventeenth century. Above the altars of the chapels in the apse are a really remarkable series of pictures, some of which are very beautiful,—notably, a "Madonna," by Filippino Lippi, and a lovely "Holy Trinity," the authorship of which is disputed. Santo Spirito is a church one can learn to love, so grey and dim and quiet is it to pray in, or to linger in, gazing at the pictures and the small, ancient, stained-glass windows, put far away beneath the roof. The broad flight of steps leading up to the great west door is a popular play-ground with the children who swarm here,—for Santo Spirito borders upon the poorest and neediest quarter of the town, the district of S. Frediano. All this part is really a bit of old Florence, with quaintly named streets, very narrow and unevenly paved, running between tall houses, green-shuttered, broad-eaved, and with mellow brown and red-tiled roofs,—streets which lead to the Piazza del Carmine, and to the ugly church of the Carmelite friars. Their Cloister once sheltered Fra Lippo

Lippi, the companion and pupil of Masaccio, whom he aided in decorating the Braucacci chapel, which is in the right-hand transept of the big white church, with a series of frescoes describing the life of St. Peter,—some of the most beautiful work to be found in Florence. Masaccio was an epoch-making master, far ahead of some of his predecessors in form and colour, and Fra Lippo's genius eagerly assisted him in this work, which remains the only beauty in the church where Lippo passed his noviciate. In the Santo Spirito quarter lies the Via Maggio,—the street of the May-time, as Ouida calls it,—where some of the best antiquity shops are to be found. These shops are less exacting than their rivals across the bridge; for this is "Oltr' Arno," and therefore an unfashionable region. To reach the fashionable quarter one must cross the Ponte Santa Trinità, which leads directly into the Via Tornabuoni, where all the gay world may be seen on a fine afternoon.

To the left of the Piazza Sta Trinità is the beautiful Gothic church of the Holy Trinity, to which all Florence flocks in Lent to hear sermons. Facing it is a slender porphyry pillar, crowned by a bronze figure of Justice with her scales, and called the Column of Justice. About this column

THE FRESCOBALDI PALACE, FLORENCE, WITH THE PONTE SANTA TRINITÀ, AND THE TOWER OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

On a winter's day.

Ponte S^a Trinita

a pitiful story is told. A great Florentine lady, in days long gone by, missed a valuable pearl necklace, and a servant girl in her household was accused of the theft. The girl protested her innocence with tears and prayers; but no one heeded. The crime was declared proved, and the girl was condemned and hanged. A year later the bronze Justice and her scales at the top of the porphyry column in Piazza Sta Trinità were in need of cleaning. On the men beginning the work they discovered in one of the scales the nest of a jackdaw, and in the nest was the lost pearl necklace.

In Via Tornabuoni stands the famous Strozzi Palace, the finest Renaissance palace in Florence. It was designed by Benedetto da Majano, and continued by Pollajuolo. The wrought-iron "fanali" or ornamental lanterns at the corners are well known for their great beauty, although made almost "common" by constant reproduction in modern ironwork. Round the Palazzo Strozzi runs a broad stone seat. At a corner beneath one of the famous lanterns an oyster-seller perpetually tenders his oysters to the unwary. At the opposite corner a flower-seller has his stall, and all through the year that angle of the old palace is

a blaze of exquisite colour. In the winter the man has delicate paper narcissi and pale Roman hyacinths, and the first great masses of pink almond blossom; a little later the street is fragrant with purple violets heaped in small bunches against the grey stone wall, vivid with yellow daffodils and with many-coloured anemones, field tulips, and perfumed lilies of the valley. These are succeeded by delicious roses—crimson, gold, and white—and delicate, long-stalked carnations, which make way for the solemn white lilies; and if you stay late enough in Florence you will learn that the wonderful harvest of flowers closes with the homely lavender spikes, which waft their spicy scent through the hot street towards the end of June.

At the back of the Palazzo Strozzi, in the old times, stood the Mercato Vecchio, which in 1888 was removed to make way for modern "improvements." It must always remain a matter for regret that the municipality of Florence did not preserve some part of the picturesque old market, instead of so ruthlessly destroying all trace of what was once the noble quarter of the mediæval city.

In the Mercato Vecchio were many houses and palaces of the nobles. Among them were those

STUDY IN THE MERCATO VECCHIO IN THE YEAR 1884, BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GHETTO

The site is now covered by the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele and the Via Strozzi.

of the Medici, whose parish church of S. Tommaso, in which the grand-ducal family were at one period married and buried, adorned it, as well as three other ancient churches, rich in the work of Della Robbia, and a fine Loggia designed and built by Vasari for Cosimo I.

In the course of years the old market became the Ghetto—and it is not to be denied that when the work of demolition began the houses were in a ruined and insanitary state, the inhabitants suffering much from the want of air and light. Nevertheless, one regrets that something could not have been saved,—some examples of the picturesque old houses, or those four little churches for which Luca carved some of his loveliest Madonnas, who now look so forlorn, ranged round a big room in the Museum of the Bargello. By what have they been supplanted—those old churches and houses of the Middle Ages? By a hideous modern square—which might be suitable in some mushroom city of the New World—in the centre of which is a statue of King Victor Emanuel I., who sits strangely upon a huge war-horse overlooking a band-stand! The whole scheme fills one with ever-increasing regret for the picturesque old Market Place which has eternally vanished.

VIII

ARCETRI

VIII

ARCETRI

MANY lovers of the romantic and the antique never cease regretting the disappearance of the old walls of Florence; but it must be considered that the sacrifice of those massive battlements has improved the condition of the town, and that the people now have fresher air, especially in summer time. On the north side of Florence all that remains of the walls are the gates, which have been left standing in forlorn isolation. On the south side, however, parts still remain—at the Porta San Niccolo, at the Porta San Giorgio, and at the Porta Romana. The Porta Romana is, perhaps, the most interesting of all the city gates. It may be called a centre of that characteristic life connected with the "Dazio Consumo," established within the massive doors, above which a half-effaced fresco of the Madonna and Child, with Saints, makes a far-away

patch of tender colour in a framework of warm red-brown. It is pleasant to linger for a few minutes and watch the shifting, vivid scene, full of life, colour, and character. A long, low-hung wine-cart packed tightly with straw-hued flasks of classic shape—the mules that draw it gay with coloured harness trappings, and little bells jingling above their headstalls—has paid its dues and goes its way. It is closely followed by another cart, stacked so high with brown faggots that it appears almost a miracle that the whole should preserve its balance; and the little horse is lost beneath the load. A crowd of smaller carts, driven by peasants and drawn by horses or donkeys, with a sprinkling of hand-carts, blocks the gateway; and the officials walk about among them armed with long, thin iron rods, with which they mercilessly prod bundles and packages and all else that the carts and hand-barrows contain. Just outside the Porta Romana is a very favourite lounging-place with the people —a large open space usually covered by groups of idlers, all apparently waiting for some one or something. Many country carts are drawn up here; also little Tuscan diligences built like waggonettes enclosed with brown leather curtains. The little lean horses that draw them stand patiently enough,

LOADING A CART WITH WINE-FLASKS

An early morning start.

Fiesole

waiting the hour for the return journey to the out-lying village they left in the early morning. It is probably about sunset when the passengers landed at the Porta Romana in the morning turn up and climb into their places, and the diligence starts off again with much jangling of bells and cracking of whips.

Looking back on the gate from the outside, one sees the remains of the old walls stretching away to right and left. Leading from them up the hill of Arcetri are two roads—the modern *Viale dei* Colli and (dating from the later Medici times) the fine broad Cypress Avenue known as Poggio Imperiale. In the days of the Grand-duke Cosimo II. there was a much-venerated convent in this neighbourhood called Montecelli, which was a favourite retreat of the Grand-duchess Marie Maddelena of Austria. To reach this convent more conveniently and quickly, she had this road made, and adorned it with marble statues, fountains, and grottoes, in the delightful style of those early days. Now only two of the Grand-duchess's fountains remain, and the four dilapidated statues of poets standing forlorn at the foot of the avenue were removed to their present position from the second façade of the Cathedral, and have, therefore,

nothing to do with the original plan of the avenue. Much of the old-world charm of Poggio Imperiale has disappeared with the appearance of a row of brand-new little villas, and the construction of the tram-line, by which the hissing train conveys the world to Galuzzo and the Certosa of Val d'Ema.

At the top of the hill, standing back from the avenue, is the Medicean villa, now known as the Institution of the S.S. Annunziata—as it has become of recent years a school for the daughters of noble families. It is a building which, like so many other villas near Florence, has a history. Many centuries ago a great family, Baroncelli by name, possessed the whole of Arcetri hill, and built on it a fortified castle, which in more peaceable times they transformed into a villa. In 1447 the Baroncelli became extinct, and the villa and property passed through many hands until, in 1548, it came into the possession of Piero Salviati. This nobleman was unfortunate. He got into some trouble with the Grand-duke, which resulted in his being declared a rebel and a traitor, and all his goods were confiscated. His villa at Arcetri was appropriated by the Grand-duke Cosimo I., and given by him to his daughter Isabella as her dowry when she

THE CISTERCIAN CONVENT OF THE VAL D' EMA, BEYOND THE PORTA ROMANA

Certosa Firenze

married Orsini, Duke of Bracciano. Duchess Isabella came to a violent end; for, having roused her husband's jealousy, with the swift justice of those lawless days, he murdered her in his villa of Carreto Guidi. This bloody deed, terrible to relate, does not seem to have aroused any anger or horror in the mind of the murdered woman's father, for we read that he conferred her dowry on her assassin and his descendants. Still later, in 1763, Poggio Imperiale reverted to the Grand-dukes of Tuscany, at the time when the Powers decided to reconstruct the grand-duchy by giving it to Francis II., Emperor of Austria. The Emperor sent his second son, the Arch-duke Leopold, to reside in Florence as his representative and heir—the future "Great Duke" (as Sir Horace Mann calls him)—and he and his successors inhabited the Pitti Palace when in Florence, moving to the villa of Poggio Imperiale in summer. Sir Horace Mann, writing in 1766 to Sir Horace Walpole, describes to this life-long friend how on midsummer day of that year the Grand-duke Leopold went in procession from the "Poggio" to the city gate, and thence to the Pitti Palace, for the ceremony known as "the receiving the homage." Again, the Minister describes how he took "the youngest Prince Meck-

lenburg," Queen Charlotte's brother, "to dine at the Poggio, which, they say, is more than dining with them (the Grand-duke and Duchess) in town"; and afterwards "we were admitted to drink coffee with them *debout*, which, it seems, is infinitely a greater honour than sitting with them at dinner." The little grand-ducal court was ruled with the iron rule of Austrian etiquette, and does not appear to have been particularly gay, save at carnival time, when the Grand-duke and his wife unbent and deigned to amuse themselves at the play and the masked balls.

When Italy became a kingdom the old villa of the Medici and the Hapsburgh-Lorraines became the property of the King, Victor Emanuel, and shortly after that event the present school was established there. Poggio Imperiale stands back from the wide cypress-bordered road; and in front of the villa gates is a broad grassy space, said by tradition to be the scene of a celebrated double duel which took place during the siege of Florence, the cause being the rivalry between Ludovico Martelli and Giovanni Bandini for the hand of the beautiful Marietta de Ricci. The story has often been told —how the besieging Imperialists and the besieged Florentines suspended hostilities while four fiery

LOOKING DOWN THE CYPRESS AVENUE
OF POGGIO IMPERIALE, ON THE ROAD
TO ARCÉTRI

youths fought to the death on the heights of Poggio Imperiale. That they were four was owing to a custom of the time, by which the two principals were allowed to choose each a man on his side to assist him in fighting out his quarrel, and this combat assumed a political aspect, from the fact that Bandini was fighting for the Medici in the Imperialist camp, and Martelli was with the Florentines. Martelli's challenge had been accepted on Bandini's side by a young Aldobrandini, who fought and was killed by Martelli's champion, the famous Dante da Castiglione; but this advantage was quickly undone by Martelli's death at the hand of Bandini. Thus neither side could claim a complete victory. Poor Marietta, the cause of all the trouble, was doubtless weeping and praying in her chamber while the young men fought. What her fate was is uncertain. We do not know whether, after all, she married the man of her choice, or in despair retired to a convent.

A winding road leads up the Arcetri Hill from Poggio Imperiale, revealing at every turn a yet more entrancing view of Florence far below. The steep path runs between fertile fields clad in rich spring greens. Across the low stone walls one catches glimpses of brilliant borders and patches of

the pale mauve iris, "the Florence Lily," standing in loveliest proximity to the emerald green of the young corn shoots, which by and by will embrace the olive trees so closely that the twisted trunks will almost disappear among the tall, slender blades. Now the graceful branches bend tenderly over the vines and the green corn, spreading above them like a delicate, shadowy veil; while, over all, the canopy of the blue sky stretches away towards Fiesole on the horizon. Cream-coloured walls, red-brown roofs, graceful towers and cupolas, lead, in wonderful harmony, the eye down to where Arno cleaves the valley and flows eternally past the beautiful city, and the fresh green of the tall poplar trees, to Pisa and the sea. The hill continues to mount, and Florence disappears between the high walls of old villa gardens, about whose gates the banksias twine their foamy blossoms of yellow and white, the long rose shoots mingling with the graceful clusters of lilac wistaria, while the judas trees lift stiff purple arms to heaven. Higher still, the piazza called "Pian di Guillari" is reached, the name conjuring up delightful pictures of the summer days of long ago. Then lovely Florentine ladies and gallant youths, whose faces gaze at us to-day from many

SUNSET IN SUMMER OVER THE FLORENTINE ROOFS

Looking towards Bellosguardo from above the Ponte Vecchio, and showing the tower and dome of S. Spirito.

an unknown portrait in all the bravery of silks and velvets, dwelt in these fine old villas.

One may read how those old-time Florentines whiled away the sunny hours with a hundred charming diversions, having, for example, a welcome always ready for certain well-known bands of strolling minstrels and buffoons, called "Guilladri," who amused them, as they rested in the shade of the ilex bosquets, with the latest song and witty tale, or with clever clownish tricks.

The Piazza takes its name from these wandering folk; but there is yet another and world-famous association with the summit of Arcetri Hill. Standing a little way to the right as the road goes down to Florence is the "Torre del Gallo," the Tower of Galileo, where the great astronomer retired to end his life in peace, watching the stars burning through the southern night.

Away to the right the road brings one to the very ancient church of Sta. Margherita in Montici, the point on which it stands dividing the valley of the Arno from the valley of the Ema. There is a lawless, cruel story in which the belfry of Sta. Margherita played a part. It tells how a feud broke out between two families of Florence—the Gherardini, patrons of the church, and the

family of Da Panzano. Two young Gherardini, Piero and Carlo, lay in wait one night and assassinated Antonio da Panzano. This crime brought the quarrel between the families to a crisis, and led the Signory of Florence to interfere to prevent more bloodshed. Whatever settlement they made evidently permitted the Gherardini to go free and did not satisfy their foes. Some time after one of the Da Panzanos, Luca by name, with his "bullies" (as the historian describes them), assaulted Carlo Gherardini in the church of Sta. Margherita. The young man fled for refuge to the belfry, from which, after a desperate resistance, he was dragged to expiate his sin with his life.

The road from Sta. Margherita winds round and down the hill, until it reaches the "Piazzale of Michelangelo," where one can enjoy a magnificent panorama of Florence and the Val d'Arno, of Monte Morello and Fiesole, and the snowy range of Carrara fading away to the west.

This Piazzale is generally very gay—a great resort of the Florentines, who climb on foot or go by tram to breathe the fresher air of the heights; while scarce an afternoon passes without bringing a small procession of cabs and carriages conveying people from every country of Europe, and con-

THE OLD MONASTERY AT VALLOMBROSA

Founded by S. Giovanni Gualberto, now used by the Italian Government as a School of Forestry. Time, early June.

tingents from the New World, to admire the wonderful view.

From the Piazzale the traveller generally visits the very ancient church of San Miniato, standing above the road on the brow of the hill, and he must be a very dull tourist who cannot feel the peculiar, almost desolate, charm of this most beautiful spot. The history of the church is lost in the vague mists and shadows of far-off ages. The saint in whose name it is dedicated was an Armenian prince who served in the Roman army under the Emperor Decius, and, being denounced to that fierce persecutor of the Christians as one of the hated sect, the Emperor condemned him to death. He was sentenced to be devoured by wild beasts; but, a savage panther refusing to harm the prince, he was then cruelly tortured and finally beheaded.

In the eleventh century San Miniato fell into a ruinous condition, and was restored by the Archbishop of Florence, Hildebrand, aided in his pious work by the Emperor Otho and Cunegunda his wife, and it became a Benedictine Abbey, among whose monks was St. John Gualbert, founder of the Valombrosan Order. To enter the church, one passes beneath an arched gateway and

on to a broad terrace, whence a flight of steps leads up to the great doorway and the beautiful marble façade, where, in an ancient mosaic representing our Lord with Saints, San Miniato stands, and above him the imperial eagle. The interior of the church is composed of a nave supported by columns, and a raised choir with a splendid ambon and mosaic screen. On the walls are dim remains of pale frescoes, while above the high altar, where the morning sun falls golden through the alabaster windows of the apse, stands a great crucifix by Luca della Robbia. In the crypt below the high altar lies the body of San Miniato, and in the chapel of St. James, in the nave, is a magnificent tomb by Rosellino, containing the body of a holy Portuguese cardinal, who died at the early age of twenty-six. In this chapel ceiling Luca della Robbia has left delicately carved and very beautiful medallions of Justice, Temperance, Prudence, and Chastity. From the tomb of the boyish cardinal, a Madonna and Child, full of serious beauty, look down on the quiet little chapel, where many come to linger and admire; and facing them is an Annunciation in fresco, by Alessio Baldovinetti, which in its low tones is full of subdued charm. It seems to perfect the little chapel, and to add just the one

necessary note of rich colour, harmonising delicately with Rosellino's creamy marble, Luca's pale blues and dazzling whites, and the browns and reds in the mosaic pavement. Moving slowly down the wide nave, where on the pavement many tombstones, adorned with little crosses, lamps, and flowers, are scattered, the towers and bridges of Florence fill the spaces left by the open doors, making three wonderful pictures, set in beautiful frames of fine ironwork and marble. On the flagged terrace we have the same view again; but there spread out unbroken—lovely either in the crimson and gold of the sunset or in the soft morning tints of amethyst and blue. To the left of the church the marble-paved cemetery of San Miniato covers the site of Michelangelo's famous fortifications. The great battlemented convent, a solid mass of brown frowning masonry, was built in the thirteenth century by one of the Florentine bishops, Andrea Mozzi, who intended to make it a summer palace for himself. But changes came, and in 1373 the Benedictine monks made way for the Olivetans. These, in their turn, were driven out of the convent by Cosimo I., who required the great building as a fortress.

Convent or fortress, it is now undergoing restora-

tion, as the church has done, and presents a busy scene of labour.

We turned from the sound of the stone-cutter's chisel and the workmen's voices, and walked away, passing beneath the low-arched gateway down the incline that leads to San Salvatore al Monte. This venerable Franciscan church is almost as ancient as its more famous neighbour ; but the vicissitudes it has suffered have been chiefly caused by the subsiding of the soil on which it is built. One of the oldest conventual establishments of Franciscans, it had the reputation of being built after a design by Pollaiuolo when, it being in ruins, a Count Passerini restored it in 1466. Modern investigation, however, has discovered that at that period Pollaiuolo was only nine years old. Raised above a steep flight of steps, bordered on either side by towering cypresses, S. Salvatore, solemn and beautiful, is a picture often invoked long after one reluctantly goes on the homeward way, down the long and steep stair-road called Monte alle Croce. On either hand the cypresses of San Salvatore continue their long lines, with here and there, between their tall trunks, a black cross, reminding one that in earlier times this hill was a "Sacro Monte," where the Stations

THE FRANCISCAN CHURCH OF S. SALVATORE AL MONTE, BENEATH THE CHURCH OF S. MINIATO

The vesper hour in winter-time.

S. MINIATO.
FIRENZE.

of the Cross were erected for the devotion of the faithful.

But the end of the road was soon reached and Florence re-entered by the Porta San Niccolo. Dusk was gathering and the lamps beginning to show their pale points of flame in the warm southern twilight, which so soon becomes night, as we threaded our way through the narrow streets which lead into the heart of the city.

IX

THE OLD ROAD TO FIESOLE

STUDY OF TUSCAN OLIVE GARDENS, WITH THE DISTANT HILLS OF THE CASENTINO

On a misty morning.

IX

THE OLD ROAD TO FIESOLE

To reach Fiesole by the old road, it is best to leave Florence by the Barriera delle Cure and, keeping to the left, to follow the river Mugnone as it flows down the valley. At first the way is lined by ugly suburban houses, such as are to be found outside most big towns; but by and by these become fewer, a greater distance divides them, while the country opens out, the hills begin to rise on either hand, poplar trees and cultivated fields taking the place of man's dull handiwork. A little farther up the hill, the Villa Palmieri towers from among encompassing trees, which clothe the hill-sides beyond.

In years gone by the Fiesole road passed under the gardens of this villa; but the tunnel (for it was more a tunnel than an archway) was closed when the late Lord Crawford, on acquiring the property,

made a new road to avoid the gardens, carrying it round a long bend which joins the old way at a point a good deal higher up.

Many interests cluster about the Villa Palmieri, at one time called the Villa of the "Fountain with Three Faces" (Fonte de Tre Visi), probably after a fountain carved with a representation which may be either of the Blessed Trinity or of the head of Janus. The villa claims to have been the most favoured of Boccaccio's many retreats, where the merry tales of the *Decameron* were told in that hot summer-time when the Black Death was reaping its terrible harvest in the streets of the mourning city. That may be one of the reasons why this hill-side earned the name of "Schifanoya" (Fly away, Care)—in allusion to that merry company, who met in the stately gardens of Villa Palmieri, and there forgot danger in songs and laughter.

From the year 1457, when Marco Palmieri bought the villa, down to the nineteenth century, his descendants kept the property. It was for this same Marco that Botticelli painted an altar-piece of the Assumption for the delightful little domed chapel in the grounds, and thereby called down on himself the censure of the Inquisition. The Holy Office condemned the picture as favouring the

THE VILLA PALMIERI

On the old road to Fiesole.

heretical doctrine which taught that those angels who remained neutral (that is, neither forsaking their God nor deciding for Satan at the time of his rebellion) became men and peopled this world. Suspicion of heresy had already fallen on Marco Palmieri through a poem he had published, and the composition of this "Assumption" by Botticelli greatly helped to confirm the vague rumours: so the picture had to be removed from the chapel. There is a story that this Altar Piece was concealed for centuries within the villa in some unknown spot, until, in recent times, Villa Palmieri, in a most dilapidated condition, was purchased by an Englishwoman. Her sole object, it is said, was to find the Botticelli picture, which she discovered at last enclosed within the solid masonry of the ancient walls. This picture is now in the National Gallery in London.

In the present day the Villa Palmieri is perhaps more associated in people's minds with Queen Victoria than with old-world stories of heresies and proscribed pictures, for twice in springtime did Her Majesty inhabit this villa. To commemorate her visits the Florentines named a road, down which the Queen must have driven day after day on her way to and from Florence, "Viale Regina Vittoria," while in the gardens of the villa two strong young

cypress trees—one planted by the Queen and the other by Princess Beatrice—are living memorials of the two visits.

The road skirts the lovely gardens of Villa Palmieri with their statues and fountains, their clipped box-hedges and green tree-clad slopes, and ascends gently between grey stone walls enclosing fruitful "poderi" (farms), and the gardens of many other villas abounding in this neighbourhood.

Conspicuous among the houses on the ridge of the hill which forms the western side of the Mugnone valley stands the square battlemented pile of the Villa Salviati. From the Fiesole road one can distinguish its magnificent terraces, forming a radiant flower-garden, where fine statues rise against a background formed by the long, picturesque building, within which lemon and orange trees find shelter from the cold winter winds. Below this terrace great fountains fall into marble basins. Dark woods clothe one side of the rising ground towards the hidden high road, and there are pleasant winding walks, green grass slopes, and quiet lakes to refresh eyes dazzled by the spring sunshine.

Many generations have come and gone since Villa Salviati was first built, and it has suffered many changes and chances. The ancient family

THE GREEN PLAINS OF TUSCANY, AND WINDING ARNO

In the foreground stands the historic Villa Salviati.

whose name it still bears sold it long ago to strangers. These, in their turn, sold it to the world-famed artists Mario and Grisi, whose kindly hospitality is still a pleasant memory among the older generation of Florentines. But the most interesting facts in the villa's history are naturally those relating to the traditions of the Salviati family, and among the many tragedies connected with their house is one particular story, which belongs, more or less, to their old Florentine villa.

Some time in the Middle Ages a certain young Duke Salviati married Veronica Cibo, also of a very noble family, and they made their home in the villa. They were not a very happy couple, the duke neglecting his wife for a certain beautiful young woman who lived in Florence, Caterina Cornacci by name. The intrigue came in time to the ears of Duchess Veronica, and she determined to rid herself of her rival after the violent fashion of those days. She matured her plans, and when all was ready to carry them out began by expressing a wish to see the lovely Caterina, and by arranging to pay her a visit. Very friendly was Duchess Veronica to the duke's sweetheart, whose charms she admired in flattering terms. Particularly she praised Caterina's golden hair, and

finally begged for a lock of it. Caterina hastened to accede to her visitor's request, when the duchess exclaimed, "Not a lock only: I must have your lovely head." This was a concerted signal. It was followed by the sudden entrance of two or three hired assassins, passing as the duchess's servants, who did indeed cut off poor Caterina's head, afterwards conveying it for their employer to Villa Salviati. It was the end of the year. The duchess had prepared a present for her husband, which, following a very old Florentine custom, took the shape of a basket containing new linen for wear through the coming year, such as every woman bestowed upon her lord, according to her means, on New Year's day. Duchess Veronica sat and watched the duke as he examined the fine linen garments prepared for him, lifting them one by one out of the basket, and doubtless admiring, as he was expected to do, the beautifully gauffered ruffs, the embroidered shirts, and the exquisite lace collars and ruffles, little dreaming of the horrible thing hidden in all the carefully chosen finery. His wife watched, and also waited for the shriek that burst from his lips, when at last, lying uncovered at the bottom of the basket, he saw the beautiful head of his unfortunate

mistress. Then the duchess fled to a carriage ordered to be in readiness to take her away, and left the villa and Florence as fast as galloping horses could take her. By the aid of a young man, who had seen the actual murderers enter Caterina's house, these were arrested and executed; but Duchess Veronica escaped unpunished, to drag out the rest of her life, let us hope, in remorse and penitence. This is the true history of a tragedy which haunts the beautiful villa, and which is difficult to forget as one gazes across the valley at the fine proportions of the house.

The villa disappears from sight before the church and convent of San Domenico are reached. The slender belfry and the long, low line of these historic buildings speak to us of very different scenes—scenes far removed from such violent passions as those which destroyed poor Caterina Cornacci.

The history of San Domenico is that of the lives of the great and holy men who have lived beneath the convent roof, and worked and suffered and died there since the day when Blessed Giovanni Domenichi first began the building in 1406. Within these walls St. Antonino lived and prayed and worked, until he was called to take up the episcopate of Florence. Fra Angelico painted here in the quiet

cloisters where Savonarola dreamed of reforming Church and people. The saintly founder of the convent of San Domenico da Fiesole was a monk, named Giovanni Domenichi, afterwards beatified, who was Provincial of all the Dominican convents in his province, and came to Florence after months of travel, during which he had visited and reformed many convents of his Order. He lodged at first at Sta. Maria Novella, and while there was persuaded by certain pious citizens to found a new monastery outside the town, where the monks would have greater tranquillity for study and meditation. Hearing and approving this project, the then Bishop of Fiesole, Jacopo Altoviti, came to the assistance of B. Giovanni and his friends with the gift of a vineyard on the hill-side of Camerata, where the present church and convent were promptly begun. Want of funds stopped the progress of the work until 1418, when a citizen, Barnabo degli Agli, died, and left a will by which he directed that his heirs should complete the building of the Dominican church and convent at Camerata on two conditions—first, that the church should be dedicated to St. Barnabas; and, secondly, that the arms of his family should be placed over the door. The three sons of Barnabo

MISTY MORNING, BELOW MONTE
CECERI, FIESOLE

degli Agli, in obedience to their father's wishes, finished the work and carried out his instructions in all respects save one. They placed his arms above the door, and completed the building; but they restored the convent to the Dominicans, who dedicated the church to their Holy Founder and not to St. Barnabas.

It was while the building of S. Domenico was in progress, and Blessed Giovanni Domenichi living at Santa Maria Novella, that a youth named Antonino di Niccolo Pierrozzi presented himself to the Prior and begged to be given the habit of St. Dominic. To prove the boy's sincerity, Blessed John inquired what books he had been studying. He answered, *The Book of Decretals*, and the Prior bade the youth return when he had learned the whole of this work by heart, and then again ask him for the habit. In less than a year Antonino returned, with the whole Canon Law by heart. This swift accomplishment of such a difficult task appearing to Blessed John as a signal mark of Divine favour, he accepted the young man with joy, and admitted him to the Order in 1405, St. Antonino being then sixteen years of age. In 1407, two years after St. Antonino entered the Order, two young men, brothers, asked for and also obtained admission to the convent of San Domenico.

Their names were Giovanni and Benedetto, sons of a peasant Pietro Vicchio of the Mugello. Giovanni took the name of Angelico in religion, and became the world-famous painter Fra Angelico. He painted much for his first and best-beloved convent; but little now remains of the pictures and frescoes with which he once adorned its walls. All save two are scattered and sold—one the beautiful enthroned Madonna holding her Child on her knee surrounded by angels and saints, to be seen over the altar of the side chapel on the left entering the church, but deprived of the original predella, which was purchased for the National Gallery in London. The other, a Crucifixion, stands in the chapter-house.

Among recent discoveries in this same convent is a portrait in fresco of Fra Angelico himself—a gentle face in profile, the cowl drawn over the head, and a pencil in the hand. This, along with a portrait of Fra Bartolomeo, each placed above a cell door, is the work of an artist called Lodovico Buti. In 1446 Fra Antonino, to the great joy of his community, was chosen Archbishop of Florence by Pope Eugenius IV., and consecrated in his convent church, thus beginning that great and beneficent episcopate which is one of the chief glories of Florence. After this event the little community at San Domenico

da Fiesole grew so rapidly that it became necessary to build another wing to the convent. The work was speedily begun, the foundation-stone of the new building being laid by Savonarola, perhaps at the request of Fra Domenico Buonvicino, at that time Prior of this convent, his devoted companion, who was afterwards to suffer and die with him. The once "new wing" is now very old—older even than the slender belfry in which hang the three bells that day by day faithfully call the people to Mass and Vespers; older, too, than the great portico that lends its dignity to the wide Piazza.

The date following the inscription above the arches of the portico is 1635. It commemorates the conversion to Christianity of the Jewish brothers Alessandro and Antonio di Vitale. They lived in the villa now called "Dell Ombrellino," not far from the church, were learned in medicine and philosophy, and very charitable. At their baptism Cardinal Medici, afterwards the Grand-duke Ferdinand, stood sponsor for the brothers, and gave them his name and his arms, without, however, the Florentine lily, and that is why the Medici shield is carved above the broad arches and columns of San Domenico.

The interior of the church is interesting. Besides

Fra Angelico's "Madonna" it possesses a very fine picture representing "The Baptism of Our Lord," by Lorenzo di Credi, and a charming "Adoration of the Magi," by Sogliano. In 1900 the monks restored their organ, which is enclosed in a little painted loft, using it for the first time after the work was completed at the High Mass of Requiem sung for the repose of the soul of the murdered King Humbert, and in memory of this circumstance the following inscription was placed on the organ :—

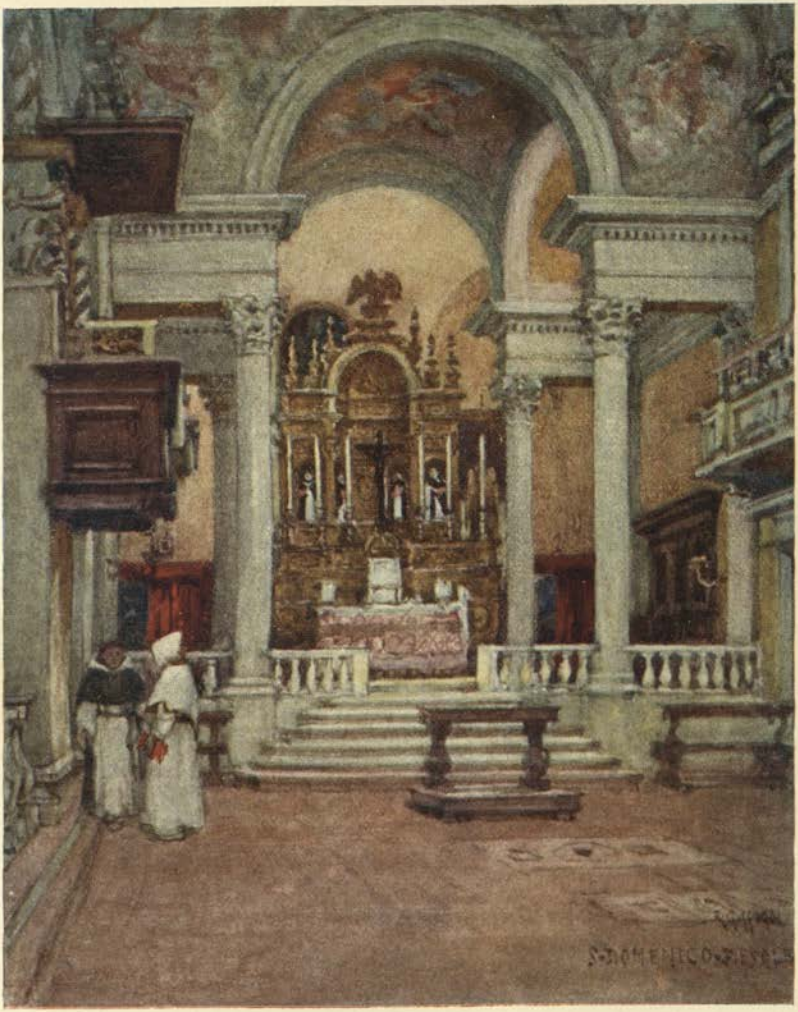
Se il regno terreno, frutta sciagura e morte a Umberto *I.*
Donagli o Dio, nel regno celeste il gaudio e la vita,
Per le preghiere della chiesa e le lagrime della patria.

His earthly kingdom bore bitter fruit of death to Humbert *I.*
But do Thou give to him, *O God, in Thy heavenly* kingdom, eternal life and joy,
Through the prayers of the Church and the tears of our country.

There is little more to say about the venerable convent and church of St. Antonino and Fra Angelico. The convent was suppressed by Napoleon I. in 1809, and its greatest treasure, Fra Angelico's fine picture of the "Coronation of Our Lady," was then carried away by the conqueror and placed in the Louvre Gallery in Paris. After this event the convent was turned into a private dwelling-house, bought eventually by the Duchess San Clemente; but a

INTERIOR OF THE CONVENT CHURCH OF THE DOMINICANS AT SAN DOMENICO DI FIESOLE

The High Altar at Easter-tide.



small part was reserved for the use of the church. After the duchess's death it passed into the possession of Count Capponi, from whom it was bought back by the Dominicans in 1879, despoiled, alas! of the greater portion of its remaining beautiful frescoes and works of art, which the Duke of S. Clemente and Count Capponi had sold to the galleries of the Louvre in Paris and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. What numberless other changes would the past generations of priors and monks behold if they could return to their cherished convent! They would find modern houses facing the church, and opposite these small humble shops, with groups of loungers seated at the tables standing in front of the wine-seller's. Every twenty minutes the tramway cars running between Fiesole and Florence cross each other on the Piazza, and cabs conveying tourists of every nationality drive by, sometimes stopping at the church door, but oftener continuing their way up the winding road to Fiesole. Only within the quiet cloister and the choir, or in the peaceful vineyard, where the little Chapel of the Beatitudes is gently falling into decay, would those saintly men whose memory still lingers, like some delicate perfume, around convent and church find the old life and the old home.

THE ILEX WALK, VILLA DELL' OMBRELLINO SAN DOMENICO, IN APRIL

X

THE OLD ROAD TO FIESOLE

(*Continued*)

THE VALLEY OF THE MUGNONE, BELOW FIESOLE, WITH MONTE RINALDINI, AND THE PONTE ALLA BADIA

X

THE OLD ROAD TO FIESOLE

(*Continued*)

ONE of the most conspicuous and beautiful features in the landscape as one ascends to Fiesole is an old abbey and convent church standing in the Mugnone valley. Tradition places these buildings on the site of a battlefield, where the Goths, under their King Radagasius, fought against the Florentines, who, with the aid of the Roman general Stilicho, were victorious. While this battle was in progress, the legend continues, St. Zenobius, Archbishop of Florence, spent the hours in supplication for his people, and so powerful were his prayers that the holy Patroness of the city, Sta. Reparata, appeared in a vision to the soldiers on the field. In her hand she held the banner of Florence, a red fleur-de-lis on a white ground,

and encouraged the soldiers to continue their efforts, until the Romans arrived and the victory was won.

Authorities all agree that this venerable abbey, in spite of being far away below the town itself, was the original cathedral of Fiesole, and that it was first given to the Benedictines when the Fiesolans built their present fine cathedral. The Benedictines took possession of their convent in 1028, and later were succeeded by the "Pulsanesi" monks, whose laxness of discipline roused the wrath of Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ." At his request the Pope, Eugenius IV., the same who made S. Antonino bishop, turned the Pulsanesi out, and gave the abbey to the canons of St. John Lateran. This new arrangement met with Cosimo's approval; and from that time he became a great patron and benefactor of the abbey, in which he had his own apartments, staying there from time to time and receiving in this favourite retreat many of the most distinguished men of his day. Thus the abbey grew rich and powerful, and Cosimo not only presented the canons with a fine library, but also rebuilt their church and house, employing Brunelleschi to make the design and superintend the work.

So it came about that the "Badia di Fiesole" is one of the finest buildings in Tuscany, possessing a beautiful loggia and cloisters, which are among the best works of the great architect of the Cathedral cupola.

Cosimo's love for the Fiesole Abbey was shared by his son Lorenzo the Magnificent, who continued in his father's footsteps, and frequently visited it with his brilliant circle of scholars, poets, and philosophers. A generation later his son Giovanni (who became the great Pope Leo X.) received in the church his Cardinal's hat; but from this time forward there seems nothing of interest recorded of the Badia di Fiesole.

It appears to have been much neglected in later days, and it fell into disrepair. In the year 1778, the Monastery was suppressed and made over to the Archbishop of Florence, who removed the fine library and added it to the Laurentian Library in the city. Latterly the fathers of the "Scuole Pie," popularly known as the "Scolopi," purchased the old abbey and entirely restored it. Here they now have a large college for boys of good family, and their scholars, of all ages and sizes, are often met with on the country roads round Fiesole, or on the road to Florence, taking their walks abroad.

A five-minutes walk takes one back to the Piazza of San Domenico and to the foot of the "Via Vecchia Fiesolana," the old steep road which leads once more up to Fiesole. Not far up the hill there stood, in the fifteenth century, a well-known inn called "Le Tre Pulzelle" ("the Three Maidens"), which name is still preserved by a villa which may stand on the site of the ancient hostelry. It is chronicled that Le Tre Pulzelle proudly displayed above its door the Medici arms—a supreme honour conferred on the house by Pope Leo X., who, being on his way to Fiesole on an auspicious January day in 1510, stopped with all his train and called for refreshments at the little inn.

Yet another reminiscence of the Medici meets us as we pass by the fine villa Rondinelli-Vitelli, opposite the spot where the Tre Pulzelle once stood in shady gardens. This was the villa that Cosimo I. improved, decorated, and bestowed upon the young Perugian Sforza Alumeni, a favourite to whom the first Grand-duke of Florence was devoted. But, too secure in the prince's favour, young Alumeni lifted presumptuous eyes to a lady beloved by Cosimo. For this folly the Grand-duke caused him to be murdered

TULIPS AND WISTARIA IN SPRING-TIME, IN THE GARDEN OF A FLORENTINE VILLA

VILLA OMBRELLINO
SDOMENICO FIESOLE

amid circumstances that might pass as suicide in the eyes of the world, which was not in the least deceived, though prudently appearing to be so.

A few steps farther the road suddenly opens out, and the lovely outlook over Florence and the Val d'Arno lies spread beneath the charmed view across the low stone walls of olive gardens, cut in terraces up and down the mountain side. Among the grey-green olives the fruit trees are all abloom, crimson of peach and white of cherry and plum; and about their roots the gay little anemones bend on slender stalks, their graceful heads bright patches of scarlet, purple, and pink, recalling the many-coloured mantles of Fra Angelico's angels. When spring is a little more advanced their places will be taken by the gorgeous wild tulips, whose flame-and-lemon-coloured cups will rise thick above the green corn-shoots; while in some quite secluded spots the lovely little pink-and-white striped variety, possessors of three different poetic names, are sure to be found. Some call them "La Bandiera," perhaps after the rose-and-white banner of Florence; others, "La Signora Dipinta" ("the Painted Lady"); and again (perhaps most familiar name of all), "the

Flower of Jerusalem." Across the olive gardens and the narrow Mugnone river rises the scarred, frowning mass of Monte Rinaldi, forming one side of the dark gorge which opens upon the upper valley of the Mugnone, stretching far away north to the foot of Monte Senario. To the left, Florence lies in the evening sunlight, the vast cupola of "Sta. Maria del Fiore" standing out softly in the clear, bright atmosphere of late afternoon, and by its side the delicate white marble shaft of the Campanile; while clustering round them, like courtiers about their queen, rise the many other towers and domes of the city. Beyond them Monte Oliveto, with its crown of cypresses and pale church-tower, meets the hill of "Bello Sguardo," melting into the far-distant horizon. To the west, long lines of violet hills embrace the snow peaks of the mysterious Cararas, and through the middle of the blue and purple plain the Arno winds like a burnished silver bow beneath the rays of the evening sun. At every upward step new beauties of colour and of light meet the charmed vision, culminating where the road makes a sudden bend, lined by a splendid row of dusky, straight-stemmed cypress trees, and then the ever-varying views over the valley far below gain still greater

ON THE OLD ROAD TO FIESOLE

Cypress avenue on the steep hillside, with a view of the plain of the Arno looking south.

Old Fireside Road.

depth of tone, framed between the massive trunks and velvet foliage of the trees. At the point where this avenue ceases the high terrace of the Villa Medici overlooks the road. Passing the high wrought-iron gates, through which a glimpse is obtained of a broad terrace, gay with brilliant flowers, and a view of Florence beyond, one comes to a smaller gate giving access to the celebrated Villa Michelozzo designed for Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ."

With the poetic fancy of those romantic times, the lovely villa was given the name of "Bel Canto" ("the Villa of Song"). It is full of memories of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who loved it, and made it a centre for much of that brilliant life of the Quattrocento handed down to us by the old Chroniclers. Here from time to time he held his Platonic conferences, to which flocked the flower of the philosophers, the men of letters, and the poets of his day. He must often have paced the noble terrace, above which great polonia trees spread their branches and open their deep purple flowers in the springtime; his arm, perhaps, flung about the shoulders of young Pico della Mirandola, while Poliziano walked beside them and Benintendi lingered near. Or one may picture him seated on

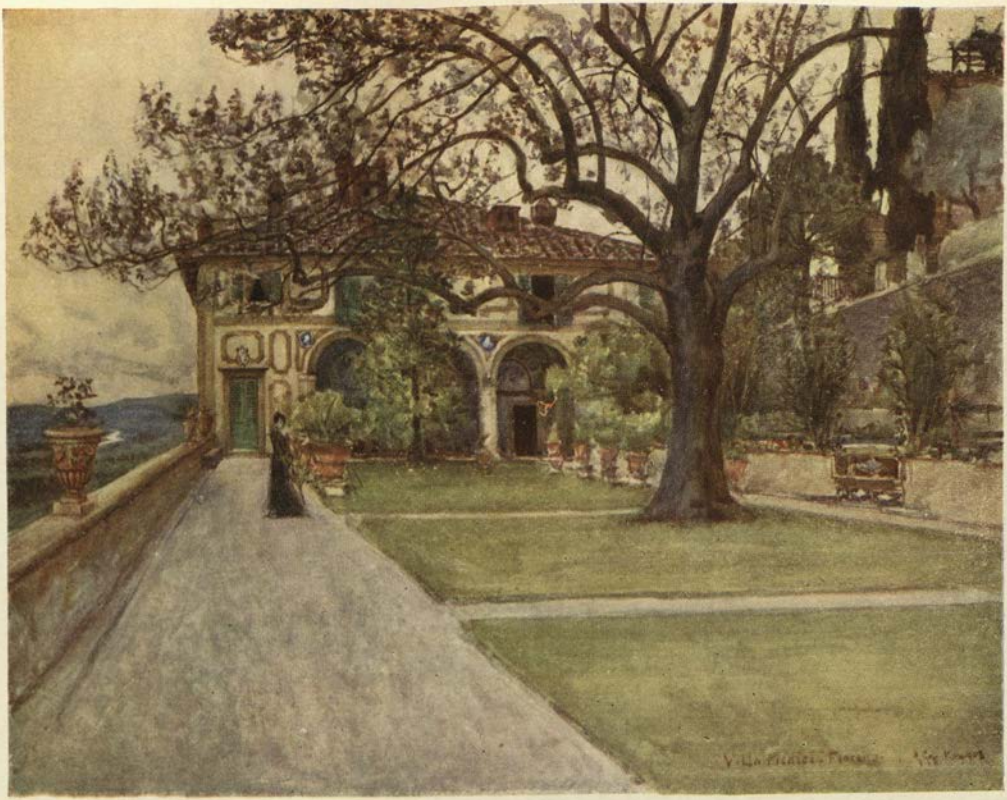
the marble bench in the garden below the house, resting and listening to some Platonic dialogue, or some new poem, presently called away to discuss a weighty matter of state with the fathers of the Republic, come hither to find him.

But there is a note of tragedy which well-nigh smothers the poet's song and the gay laughter of Lorenzo's Court at Villa Medici. For it was in those vast rooms or on the great terrace that the Pazzi conspirators hatched their murderous plot, and it was here they first intended to carry out their plans. The occasion chosen was a banquet to be given at the villa by Lorenzo to Cardinal Riario, a youthful Eminence from Rome then on a visit to Florence and the Medici. To this feast were invited the Pazzi, their partisans and fellow-conspirators, who, at a given signal, were to fall upon the two Medici brothers. But Giuliano never came: so the conspirators hastily decided to wait for a better opportunity, and left Lorenzo's table still resolved to carry out their plot, which they did later in Florence Cathedral.

The Medici family retained their Fiesole villa until the reign of Cosimo III., when it was sold. Since then it has had many owners, amongst others the eccentric sister-in-law of Sir Horace

THE VILLA MEDICI AT FIESOLE

Built for Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ," by the architect Michelozzo. It was here the Pazzi Conspiracy was organised.



Walpole, the Countess of Orford, who died here in 1773, leaving everything she possessed to her faithful friend Cavaliere Mozzi, whose name the villa bore for many years.

Below the terraces of Villa Medici stands a little chapel, dedicated to San Anzano, hidden away among gardens and olive and fruit orchards, somewhat difficult to reach, as the road that passes it is little more than a dried-up water-course. There is nothing particular to notice about the exterior of the chapel, which dates from the tenth century; but the interior contains some good della Robbia work, and the very doubtful "triumphs" of Botticelli. Ecclesiastically it is a benefice attached to the chapter of Fiesole.

On the hill-side, which rises sharply behind Villa Medici, built on a small platform overlooking the house and garden, stands the interesting convent of San Girolamo. A very picturesque flight of stone steps leads from the road to the convent chapel. Within tall iron gates a shallow stairway, divided into three flights, ascends; beneath, an avenue of cypress trees, planted between the stones, over which they tower solemn and majestic, casting deep shadows on the worn grey steps. This convent was founded in 1360 by two Florentines, Carlo dei

Conti and Guido Montegranello, and was very small and humble; in fact, it was called a hermitage, the brethren belonging to the Institution of the hermits of S. Jerome. But the little community grew so rapidly, and the people favoured them so highly, that Cosimo, "Pater Patriæ," that great benefactor of the Church, built the hermits a new church and convent suitable to their needs, from designs by Michelozzo, who had but lately completed his beautiful villa just beneath the humble hermitage. The brethren continued to flourish in their new house until 1668, when they were suppressed by Pope Clement IX. The convent was then purchased by the family of Ricasoli, one of whose members, Padre Luigi, a Jesuit priest, left it to his society, and for many years San Girolamo was the residence of the General of the Order. Now it is rented by a company of English nuns, the "Little Company of Mary" (familiarly known as the "Blue Nuns," from the blue in their habits), who have turned part of their convent into a most useful house, in which they receive convalescents.

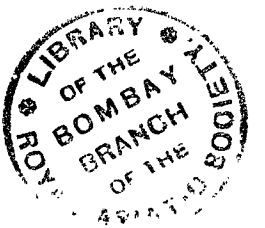
And here the Via Vecchia Fiesolana ends. A few steps more, following the wall of the old Medici

THE STEPS OF THE CONVENT OF SAN GIROLAMO

Now the English convent of the Little Servants of Mary. From the terrace on the extreme left one of the most beautiful views over Florence is obtained. A hot summer's day.

S. Girolamo. Fiesole

Villa, past a shrine, before which a bouquet of flowers, left as a humble offering, droops, withered by the heat of the passing day, and Fiesole, mother of the city of Florence, is reached, bathed in the golden rays of the evening sun.



XI

FIESOLE

"A CITY SET ON A HILL"

VIEW OVER THE TUSCAN HILLS, FROM THE "TORRE ROSSA," FIESOLE

A winter day, at noon.

XI

FIESOLE

"A CITY SET ON A HILL"

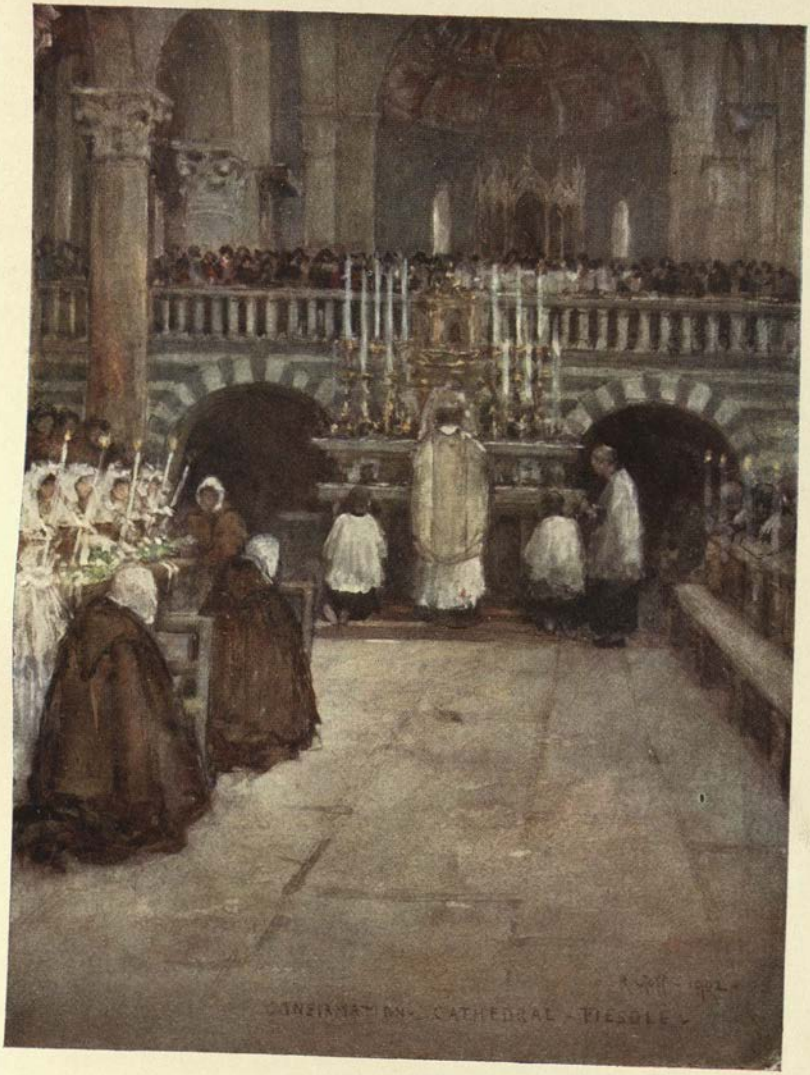
THE origin of Fiesole, the venerable Etruscan city and mother of Florence, goes far back into mists and obscurity. It is certain, however, that Fiesole was one of the most important and one of the richest cities of the ancient kingdom. Also, it was the capital of a province; for Etruria was divided into provinces, and in the histories and the chronicles of those far-off times Fiesole figures as a strong, flourishing, and powerful town of considerable influence and importance. It continued to thrive and increase until the rise of the great Roman Empire, when, according to some authorities, it was besieged and captured by Julius Cæsar and became a Roman city. The conquerors immediately set about beautifying and improving the town.

They raised great buildings, temples, and marble palaces on every hand, and erected a citadel on the hill where now stands the Franciscan convent, and constructed a fine amphitheatre with baths, the ruins of which are shown to visitors to this day. But down below on the banks of the Arno the Romans were planning a new city, and many of the Fiesolans migrated to it—not only the people but also a considerable number of the nobles. This circumstance explains why the crescent moon of Fiesole is displayed so often on Florentine coats of arms, the reason being that the families who bear it came originally from the city on the hill.

After the Roman occupation Fiesole fell into the hands of the hordes of northern barbarians who subsequently poured into Italy, ravaging with fire and sword, and laying waste the fertile country as they fought their way to the south. The position of Fiesole made it the guardian of the high road running from the north through the valley of the Po, and across the great barrier of the Apennines into the heart of the peninsula. To capture it was naturally of supreme importance to these invaders, and they laid siege to the city in the year 540. Fiesole fell, was completely destroyed by its new masters, and from that moment declined in import-

FIRST COMMUNION OF THE CHILDREN
OF FIESOLE, IN THE CATHEDRAL

Early Morning.



ance, never to raise its head again. The citizens degenerated into idleness and vice, and no attempt was made to reconstruct the ruined buildings, or to restore them to their ancient beauty and grandeur. But in a later century these old Etruscan and Roman ruins supplied material for the present cathedral, and out of the remains of the citadel grew the convent of San Francesco and the church of S. Alessandro; while the Florentines borrowed largely from many demolished temples for the building of S. Giovanni and S. Miniato.

Through the long and stormy years of the Florentine republic Fiesole had sunk into being merely one of seventy-two divisions into which the state was then divided. In 1515 it was granted a "gonfaloniere" or chief magistrate of its own, and five years later this office was merged into that of "podestà," an official who was given jurisdiction over a wide territory. To-day Fiesole is a simple commune, which embraces a considerable district, and is more important as an ecclesiastical see than anything else, the bishop ruling over a vast diocese.

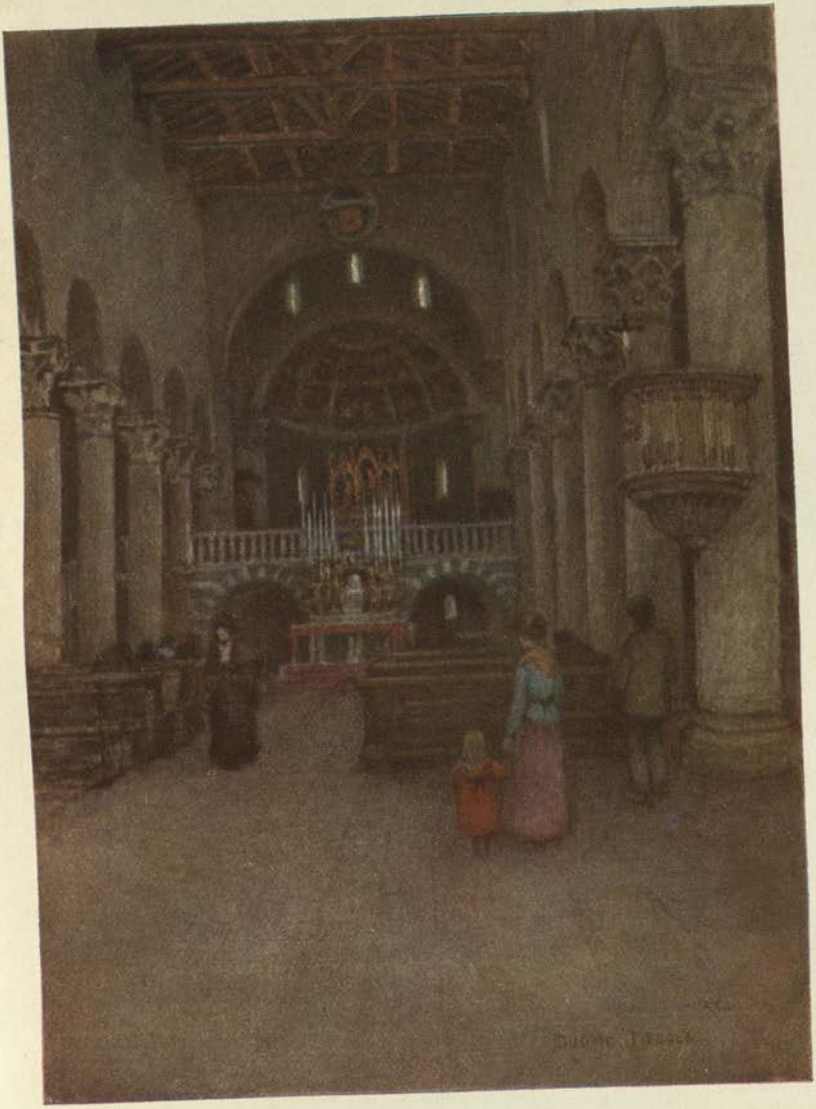
The life of most small Tuscan towns gathers round the principal piazza, and Fiesole does not differ from other towns in this respect. Here is the usual broad, sunny square, shaded by a few

trees, with the post-office, some shops, the principal inn,—well known to the world as the "Albergo Aurora,"—the bishop's palace, and the great cathedral, the severely simple belfry of which is a landmark for miles around, for Fiesole is truly a "city set on a hill." Built on a long neck between two steep ascents, it is conspicuous for miles across the Mugnone Plain on the north, and the valley of the Arno on the south.

The cathedral is of Tuscan-Romanesque architecture. The interior is dimly beautiful; the choir raised above a crypt, and a double row of fine columns ornamented by handsome capitals supporting the nave. It was built in 1028 by Bishop Jacopo Bavaro, who deemed the then existing structure, now the Badia of Fiesole, too far away from the town for its purpose. He took the materials for his new church from the ancient ruins of the Roman city, and the above-mentioned columns of the nave, sixteen in all, once formed part of a pagan temple. Bishop Bavaro dedicated the cathedral to the Apostle of Fiesole, St. Romulo, a noble Roman citizen, a convert of St. Peter himself, who was sent by the Prince of the Apostles to evangelise the Fiesolans. But St. Romulo was denounced for his faith to the prætor of

INTERIOR OF THE CATHEDRAL, FIESOLE

Looking up the nave to the Choir and High Altar, showing the ancient columns and entrances to crypt.



the city, who at once condemned him to death, and commanded his soldiers to throw him into a dungeon, where, legend says, the saint lingered for four days, after which he was stabbed to death with a dagger.

Bishop Bavaro did not live to see his cathedral finished, and it was left to S. Andrea Corsini, a fourteenth-century bishop, to add the façade, while the campanile, which has been restored, dates from the thirteenth century. These mediæval bishops were not only great spiritual but also powerful feudal lords of Fiesole, and of many other fiefs in Val d'Arno and Val di Sieve. The inhabitants of their fiefs actually took the oath of obedience to them as temporal lords, and they still bear the title of Conti di Turicchi, after one of their ancient fiefs in Val di Sieve.

The Episcopal Palace is a picturesque building, with a double outside staircase leading down to the piazza, and it is a picturesque sight to see the procession of priests, canons, and bishop descending this stairway and walking to Mass or Vespers, across the piazza lying between the palace and the cathedral.

Across the piazza to the east a small church of the tenth century, with a graceful portico, called "Sta. Maria Primerana," or "Sta. Maria Intemerata," arrests the eye. In old days, on the second

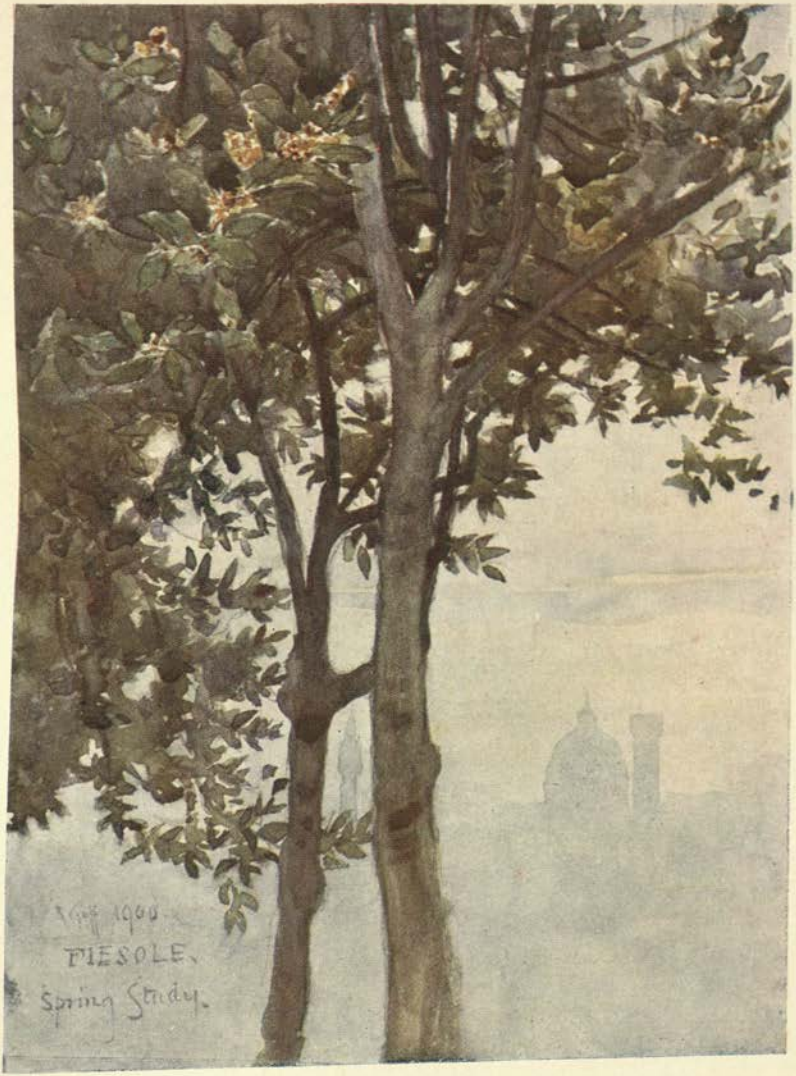
Sunday in May, the bishop, when newly appointed, took solemn possession of his diocese within its walls, and the gonfalonieri on their election were installed here. Kept in the church of Sta. Maria is an ancient Greek picture of Our Lady, reputed to be miraculous, which, on certain occasions of national disaster or distress has been carried in solemn procession down the long winding road to Florence, followed by the prayers and invocations of the people. Standing just outside the church, a stone column commemorates the return of the Grand-duke Ferdinand III. to Tuscany and the defeat of the Emperor Napoleon I.; it occupies the spot where a "tree of liberty"—planted by the French—was rooted up and destroyed by the Fiesolans.

To the west of the piazza a steep hill ascends to the convent of S. Francesco and the church of S. Alessandro, which stand among cypress trees on the hill once crowned by the Roman citadel, believed to be impregnable, and by the prætorium.

To-day there is no tramp of armed men, no marching to and fro of legions on this peaceful spot; only now and then the brown-habited sons of S. Francis pass silently by and disappear beneath the cloister gate, or a little band of people enter the dark church to hear the brothers sing Vespers, while

A MISTY EFFECT OF THE TOWERS OF FLORENCE

From beneath the bay trees at Fiesole.


FIESOLE.
Spring Study.

others, lounging on the terrace, lean over the low wall, looking with dreamy eyes at Florence shrouded in the evening mists far away below.

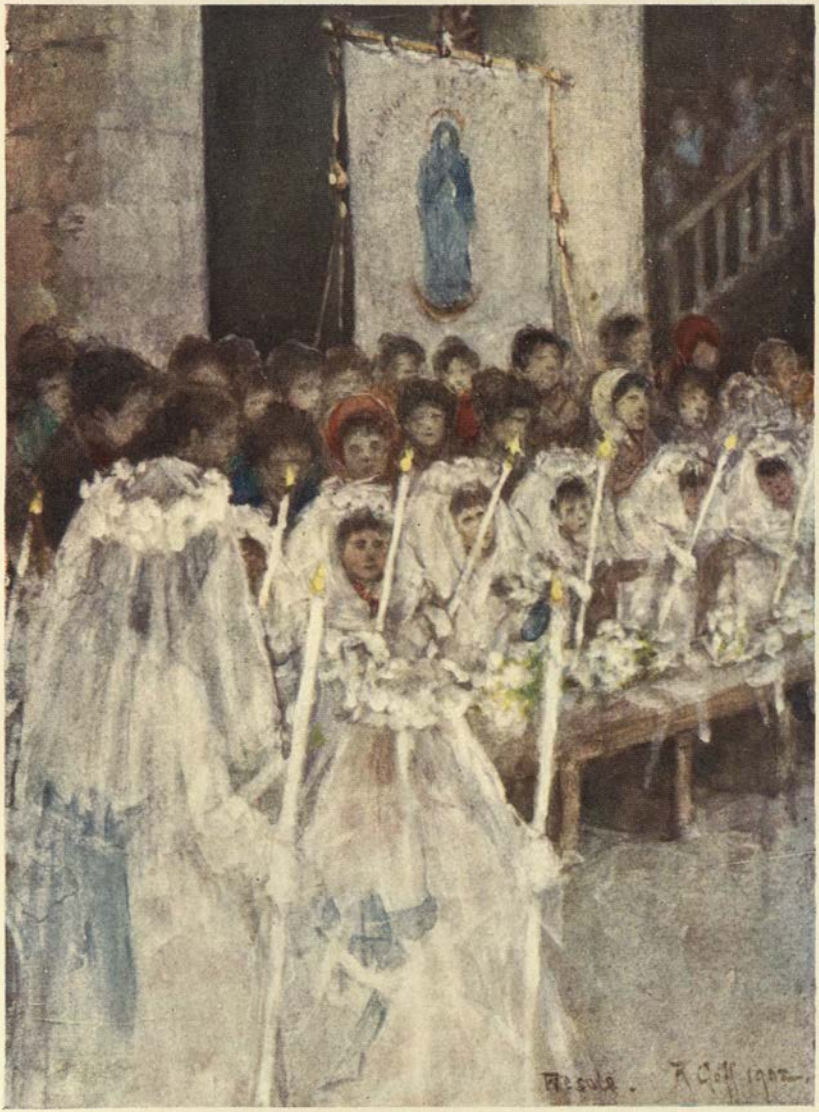
Both churches on this hill-top are of very ancient date. Indeed, S. Alessandro is reputed to be the oldest basilica in Tuscany, occupying the spot where once Theodoric, King of the Goths, built a pagan temple. But the church of S. Alessandro, once very important, lost everything when the cathedral was built. Stripped of all its ornaments, which were taken for bishop Bavaro's new building, the old church was left to fall into decay from neglect and misuse, until the two Jewish Medici of S. Domenico, taking pity on its forlorn condition, restored it, leaving yet another pious memorial of their charitable lives.

Fiesole has produced many men well known in literature and other arts. The most celebrated of these were (in the fifteenth century) the famous Mino da Fiesole and (in modern times) Giovanni Bastianini. Both were sculptors, and in the list of Fiesole's famous sons a large proportion were carvers in stone. A modern Italian writer points out that the situation of the city accounts for this. It stands in the very heart of the great stone quarries out of which this city and Florence were built. The eyes

of the youthful citizens are daily accustomed to the sight of huge blocks of stone obtained from the quarries of Monte Ceceri and Monte Rinaldi, destined, beneath the stone-cutters' busy chisels, to form part of some one of the innumerable buildings rising all over the country. This everyday familiar sight naturally produces an effect upon young minds, which as they develop become eager to be apprenticed to a trade supplying occupation for the whole neighbourhood. Thus these natural causes have from generation to generation made stone-cutters of the Fiesolans and the inhabitants of the little outlying villages within reach of the quarries. The genius of three sculptors—Desiderio da Settignano, Benedetto da Maiano, and Mino da Fiesole, all three associated with the little hill city—has far surpassed their fellows, and the work they produced has carried their fame all over Italy and the world. But Mino, properly speaking, cannot be claimed by Fiesole as one of her own children, any more than Benedetto or Desiderio; for he was born at Poppi, a city of the Casentino, and was an adopted son, if one may so express it, of the town whose name he bears, and in whose cathedral he has left, as his greatest memorial, the beautiful tomb he carved for Bishop Salutati.

A FIRST COMMUNION IN THE CATHEDRAL OF FIESOLE

The little girls are members of the Society of "Children of Mary." This ceremony takes place at Whitsuntide.



The memory of these mediæval workers in stone carried us back to those earlier builders of the first Fiesole, and we turned our footsteps towards the charmingly situated ruined theatre, built so long ago, when the Romans conquered the Etruscan city, still so admirable in its decay. The theatre stands on the hillside, facing north, and overlooking the valley of the Mugnone, which stretched away far below us to the rocky desert of Monte Senario; and close beside it interesting remains of the great baths, with traces of furnaces used for heating purposes, and pipes for conducting the water, reminded us from what distant times so many of our modern appliances date. A little below these can be seen all that has survived of the old Etruscan walls, colossal even in decay, and what an impression they give of the splendid height and strength which made them such magnificent ramparts in Julius Cæsar's time! The theatre and the baths are unenclosed; and among all these traces of the remote past the Tuscan peasant works cheerfully among the olive trees and vine tangles. He ploughs, sows, tends, and afterwards reaps the bountiful harvest which the golden sun of Italy ripens in reward for his labours, using implements scarcely different from those of Roman times.

Wandering between the rich fields, we suddenly came upon a dug-out little hollow containing a Roman altar, the mystery of which was eloquent with dreams as we gazed down upon it, and up at all the grass-embowered ruins round about. It was an altar of the old pagan rite, and on the summit of the hill above it rose the tall belfry of the Christian Church which had destroyed the gods of ancient Rome. Yet, somehow, the gods seemed to be still here, lurking among the vines hidden among the groves of ilex and cypress trees.

Suddenly, from the campanile, the first bell of the Ave Maria came floating through the air and across our fancies. The sun was setting in a blaze of crimson and gold; a light breeze sent a shiver through the olives and rustled the vine leaves. The old gods fled, and the first firefly drifted gently by—so close we could almost catch the little living spark. Other fireflies pursued him; then more and more, until the patches of corn became a sea of melting, vivid light. On the horizon the moon rose, sailing slowly and majestically beyond the cypress tops, gently spreading a silver pall over the ruined theatre and the lonely altar.

THE VALLEY OF THE MUGNONE, LOOKING NORTH TO MONTE SENARIO IN THE DISTANCE

A stormy winter day.

MIGNONE
FIESOLE

XII

PRATO

A SPRING STORM, SWEEPING OVER
THE VALLEY OF THE ARNO

XII

PRATO

THE ancient walled city of Prato, which preserves "Our Lady's Girdle," and in which Fra Lippo Lippi passed a portion of his not very edifying life, lies almost equi-distant between Florence and Pistoia in the vine-covered valley of the Arno. A short railway journey from Florence lands the traveller at the shabby little station. Thence an uninteresting street leads directly to the Piazza del Duomo, a sunny square, pleasant with the sound of water from a marble fountain, while the black-and-white cathedral façade casts a dense shadow upon an uneven pavement.

The ancient Tuscan-Romanesque cathedral, completed by Giovanni Pisano in 1317, invited us to enter, and study the many beauties with which the interior is adorned; but first we paused before the exquisite little pulpit at the angle of the west

front, from the shelter of which the great relic, Our Lady's Girdle, is exposed for the veneration of the faithful on certain yearly festivals. Round this graceful canopied pulpit Donatello has carved an entrancing ring of child angels, dancing joyfully before the Lord, with delicate rounded limbs and lovely innocent faces—one of the most perfect works of sculpture to be found even in Italy.

As we turned to enter the west door another work arrested our attention—a lunette by Andrea della Robbia, reminding us of one we had lately admired over the west door of Pistoia Cathedral. Here the Virgin Mother, holding in her arms the Divine Child, stands between the two young martyred deacons—St. Stephen, first to shed his blood for the faith, and St. Lawrence. It is dated 1489. Beneath this lovely group we passed into the church, which, though of no great size, is impressive by reason of its fine proportions and its perfect simplicity. Immediately to the left stands the chapel of the famous relic, protected by an elaborate wrought-iron grille, the work of a Florentine artist, Bruno di Ser Lapo, in which the Greek honeysuckle pattern is reproduced with happy effect. The silver altar contains the relic, and all round the chapel walls Agnolo Gaddi has painted

THE WEST FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL OF PRATO

Showing the outside pulpit, with Donatello's frieze of angels.

PRATO.
17.5.47

in fresco the story of how Prato came into possession of this treasure. He first represents Our Lady, after her Assumption, bestowing her girdle upon St. Thomas the apostle; then how it was preserved for many years after his death in a pious Christian family living in Jerusalem. The legend proceeds to unfold itself with the arrival in the Holy City of a young knight of Prato, during the wars of the First Crusade, who there wooed and won the daughter of the possessor of the Holy Girdle, who gave it to his tenderly loved child for her dowry, counting the relic to be his most priceless possession. The marriage solemnities concluded, the young couple set sail for the bridegroom's native land; but first they reverently deposited the casket containing the Holy Girdle at the foot of their vessel's mast. Preserved by the relic from storms and dangers, husband and wife arrived safely in Prato, and conveyed the girdle to their own house, concealing it in their bedroom, and speaking to no one of its existence. One night, however, angels lifted the knight, as he slept, from his comfortable couch, and laid him down on the bare floor, teaching him thus a lesson in reverence which he was not slow to interpret, understanding thereby that he should immediately

provide a suitable abiding-place for the Holy Girdle. With this object in view, he sought the Bishop of Prato, and the Girdle was removed with great solemnity to the cathedral, and afterwards deposited in the chapel, where it remains to this day.

Midway in the cathedral nave stands the pulpit, carved by Mino da Fiesole and Antonio Rosellino, its four columns resting on curious monsters, shaped like sphinxes and serpents—a very unusual composition. Farther on, in the right transept, is the shrine known as the "Madonna dell' Ulivo," containing a relief by Benedetto da Maiano; and over against it is the picture by Lippo Lippi of the "Death of St. Bernard," which in the dim light seemed to possess the colours of some bright jewel, and is crowded with figures finely drawn. Far more beautiful than anything we had yet seen, however, were the magnificent frescoes with which Lippo Lippi has decorated the choir walls. Italy is the land of beautiful frescoes; but scarcely any rival these splendid compositions depicting the Life of St. Stephen and the Life of St. John Baptist. Surely nothing nobler was ever conceived than that vast and solemn hall, in which the youthful protomartyr lies on his bier, with closed eyes and folded hands, very peaceful, the good fight fought, the

prize won. Weeping women surround him; and men, some with faces stern in grief, others wearing an expression of triumphant ecstasy, in the great witness borne by the martyred saint who was first to gain the palm and the crown.

Facing this scene of mourning yet holy joy is one of a very different character, the Feast of Herod. The tyrant, who is seated, fixes a sinister look upon the exquisite figure of Salome, who is dancing before him with pensive face, poised, among her floating draperies, on slender arched feet, like some graceful bird. By Herod's side is the wicked Herodias; and in the right-hand corner of the great fresco we witness the scene where, the boon granted, St. John Baptist's head is delivered to Herodias by the lovely dancer, while a fine group of servants shrink away from mother and daughter, stricken with sudden horror. It is many a year ago since Fra Lippo came to Prato, and took the sweet-faced Lucrezia Buti from her convent of Sta. Margherita, representing her delicate features and slender figure in the Salome of this fresco. Fresh and lovely his work remains in the Cathedral of St. Stephen,—a perfect example of Florentine Early Renaissance art, which the hand that placed it there has never surpassed. In Prato, Filippo Lippi's son, Filippino,

was born; and one of the most beautiful objects in the little city is a shrine the latter painted in fresco at the corner of an obscure street, down which the stranger is escorted by a train of picturesquely ragged children. They stand gazing, an interested small crowd, while an old woman unlocks the doors which protect the tabernacle, their attention divided between the "Forestieri," the gentle, queenly Madonna, with her Babe, in a halo of cloudy cherub-heads, and St. Margaret kneeling at her side.

From Filippino's shrine we found our way to the interesting circular church of the "Madonna dei Carceri." The road thither led us through a vast piazza, in one corner of which stands an ancient city gate. The centre, which is grass-grown, is a happy playground for the children, who tumble over one another in their endless games. The little grey houses flanking the sides are coppersmiths' workshops; and in every doorway, sheltered beneath simple arcades, the men were to be seen busy at their work, the clang of the forge rising and falling on the air. The musical sound transported us into a different atmosphere,—the charmed world of German legend and song; and it seemed as if the next step must reveal young Siegfried at

his forge with dwarf Mime by his side, and the music of that great, well-remembered scene wove itself into the rhythm of hammer and anvil. The great copper vessels lay in confusion on the ground, bright burnished heaps, catching the ruddy light within the dark forges, where the fires glowed and the black bellows swung. All about and around, as the men beat out the fine copper, the little tripping song rose and fell, accompanying us on our way, until we turned a corner, and left the busy smiths to their toil.

Overlooking a massive frowning prison stands San Gallo's beautiful church of the Madonna delle Carceri, which he completed in 1490. The interior of this church is most striking, and quite simple, with nothing to mar the effects of the fine architectural details or the terra-cotta decorations by Andrea della Robbia. These latter consist of four medallions of the evangelists in the vault of the dome, in the style of Brunelleschi's evangelists in the Pazzi Chapel at Florence, and a very beautiful frieze. This frieze is considered by Reymond to be the finest piece of decorative work Andrea ever executed. The design is elaborate—festoons of fruits and flowers caught by ribbons and attached to candelabra, while at intervals from these same

ribbons garlands hang suspended, enclosing fine coats of arms. To the grey walls of the church the soft blue-and-white glaze of the enamels gives a delightful touch of colour, while the beauty of Andrea's design lends an additional charm to the severe lines of San Gallo's classic temple.

From this church we strolled through quiet streets, catching from time to time a glimpse of some delightful bit of architecture, or of some combination of bright colour — a pot of crimson carnations pushing grey-green stalks and vivid flowers through the fifteenth-century iron-work of a small balcony, or a crudely-coloured terra-cotta ornament above a house door. We passed the great Church of S. Francesco, with its marble façade, and were ere long standing before the massive, square-shaped Palazzo Pubblico, a magnificent example of ancient brick-work, with an interesting outside staircase and a delightful fountain at its foot. The north side of this Piazza is formed by a plain arcaded building, which contains a small and interesting picture gallery; and there a complete set of old blue-and-white Faenza pharmacy jars, once in use at the town hospital, is kept from possible destruction.

Evening was closing in when we strolled back

STUDY OF PINK OLEANDER BLOSSOM,
THE "MAZZA DI SAN GUISEPPE"

PIAZZA di S. GIUSEPPE.
(Oleandri)

to the Madonna delle Carceri, to take the steam-tram to Florence. The streets were very quiet, with few passing vehicles; nobody seemed in a hurry, and one was impressed by the feeling that the wheels of life revolved pleasantly in Prato. It was difficult to imagine under these peaceful conditions the horrors of the year 1512, when this same Prato, besieged and taken by the Spaniards, was given over to the savage soldiery, who ruthlessly sacked the city, almost exterminating the inhabitants. The horrors then endured by the unfortunate Pratese are terrible beyond description. But to-day the little city, with its busy coppersmiths and straw-plaiting industry, wears an air of prosperity, and our modern minds refused to grasp the reality of the terrible "Sack of Prato" as we watched its towers and high walls disappear in the blue mist of dust that the screaming tram left in its wake. We rushed along the white road to Florence, past villas in whose gardens the slender oleanders lifted rose-red and creamy blossoms to the golden sky,—"Mazza di San Guiseppe,"—the posies of St. Joseph the Tuscans call them. To the left we caught a glimpse of the royal villas—Castello, among its chestnut trees, and Petraia on the hill-side. We halted on the picturesque little piazza

of Sesto, where half-effaced frescoes give a passing warmth of colour to the mellow church portico; then we crossed the bridge, and were back in the Florence streets again, borne, with all the smoothness of electricity, to the foot of Sta. Maria Novella, where we said farewell to our dusty car.

XIII

PISTOIA

STUDY OF ORANGE AND LEMON TREES
IN AN ANCIENT CONVENT GARDEN

XIII

PISTOIA

VERY slowly the train emerges on the top of the Pass from an apparently never-ending tunnel. The great northern barrier of the Apennines lies behind us now, and we are in Tuscany. Far below lies a vast stretch of verdant country; and the guard, as he threads his way along the narrow corridor, points with his finger and remarks abruptly, "Ecco Pistoia." Following his indication, we see the little walled city, lying in the green lap of the plain and sheltered at the foot of the mighty mountains. The sunset lights catch the beautiful dome of Sta. Maria dell' Umilta and the high church towers, and deepen the red and brown and cream-coloured tones of many clustered buildings lying secure within the battlemented walls that for long ages have defended Pistoia from her foes. The train moves on, and a few seconds

only can we thus gaze; then the vision disappears, and a memory which holds something of the nature of a greeting alone remains.

There is a legend that in the year 62 B.C. Catiline, the Roman General, occupied the city of Pistoia, and, in a terrible battle with the army of Anthony, fell before its walls. Traces of the Roman city still remain beneath the later buildings, those tenth-century churches and Early Renaissance palaces that fill the narrow streets of Pistoia with interest and beauty. The Pistoiese appear in history as a turbulent people, perpetually menacing the proud Republic of Florence, and taking part in all the strifes and tumults that rent mediæval Italy. The city was Ghibelline in politics, and it was in Pistoia that the party names of Bianchi and Neri were first given to the rival factions. Adopted by Florence, they became popular terms for the partisans of Emperor and Pope.

In 1324 Pistoia was betrayed into the hands of Castruccio Castracane, Lord of Lucca, and was finally conquered by Florence in 1351, after which nothing of importance is recorded of the city. Once dependent on their powerful neighbour, the Pistoiese apparently resigned themselves to their

vassalage, and while following the occupation of gunsmiths—a trade which helps to keep the city prosperous to this day—devoted some of their time also to art, and to beautifying their city. It was then that Pistoia attained a certain importance as a town in which artists found a welcome, especially Florentine artists, who were in a majority among the illustrious men employed to adorn the churches and public buildings of the city. Before the Florentine conquest, however, a foundation had already been laid by native artists, whose remarkable work excites our ardent admiration. Besides producing architects and sculptors of the highest merit, Pistoia had also her men of letters. Chief among these was Guittone Sinibaldi, better known as "Messer Cino," the poet, and friend of Dante, and the subject of one of Petrarch's sonnets. This great scholar and poet was born in Pistoia in 1272; but the larger portion of his life was spent far away from his native town, and it was not until after long years of exile that he returned to die in the place of his birth, and was laid to rest in the cathedral. The centre of Pistoia lies in the Piazza Maggiore, a square, surrounded by a noble group of buildings. Facing westward stands the fine Cathedral, with the Campanile, Baptistery, and

Episcopal palace, and over against them two lovely little Early Renaissance palaces, the "Palazzo Comunale" and the "Palazzo Pretorio," which seem to lend an extra grace to the worn grey stones of the piazza.

The cathedral of Pistoia, dedicated to St. James the Apostle, is of very ancient foundation, some authorities dating it from the fifth century, and others from the eighth. It is certain that in the twelfth century the Countess Matilda of Tuscany restored the building, and that in the thirteenth it was enlarged from designs by the great Pisan architect, Niccolo Pisano. The marble portico was decorated somewhat later, while the graceful campanile is said to have been erected upon the foundations of an ancient fortified Roman tower. Above the west door of the cathedral Andrea della Robbia has left us one of his most divinely beautiful Madonnas, looking out over the city with tender eyes, her arms twined about the Divine Child. On either hand angels adore the Mystery of the Incarnation, and hold a crown of glory above Our Lady's head.

As we entered the wide cathedral the aisles stretched away before us, full of dim mystery, hushed and devotional, and the air was fragrant

with the perfume of spent incense, which met us as we moved slowly forward to the chapel of St. James, the silver altar of which is the greatest treasure the church contains. The commission for this wonderful specimen of the goldsmith's art was given first to Niccolo Pisano; but he died before the work was even begun, and it was carried out by various artists, among them being Andrea di Jacopo d' Ognabene, Martin Gilio, Leonardo di Ser Giovanni (a Florentine, to whom was confided the panels describing the life of St. James), and a German goldsmith, Pietro d' Arrigo, who executed several of the small statues. Considerable as is this list of artists, it does not contain the names of all the craftsmen engaged for many years on this wonderful work, which was destined to receive the relics of blessed Atto, founder of the cathedral, in the early days of the Christian Church. For ourselves, this altar, interesting as it is, lacked charm and simplicity, and we derived more pleasure from Lorenzo di Credi's beautiful "Madonna Enthroned," in the Pappagalli chapel of the opposite transept. In this picture Our Lady holding the Divine Infant on her lap is seated on a very high throne, which is approached by a flight of steps, covered by a magnificent carpet. On either hand stand St.

Zeno, the holy Bishop of Verona, and St. John Baptist. Through columns and arches in the background a peaceful sunny landscape is seen, such as those early Tuscan artists loved so well, full of grace and poetry, and we longed for more time to linger and enjoy it, in the quiet of the little chapel; but so much still remained to be seen. We turned away, therefore, to find Messer Cino's tomb, on which his effigy is carved—a giant in the midst of his disciples, his stature emblematical of those gifts the possession of which set him so far above the learned scholars of Bologna University. A quaint mode is this of expressing superiority in natural gifts, and even of holiness, by greater bodily size, which is often met with in the work of the primitive painters. From Messer Cino's tomb we went to examine Andrea Ferrucci di Fiesole's finely carved font, and the celebrated monument to Cardinal Forteguerri, said to be designed by Verrocchio; but more pleasing than either of these, perhaps, is the simple marble bust of Bishop Donati dei Medici, attributed to Antonio Rosellino, with his kindly rugged face and perfect hands folded in prayer. Below his figure is carved the great family coat of arms, completing a piece of work delightful in form and feeling.

Leaving the cathedral we found ourselves opposite the two ancient palaces — the Palazzo Comunale, or Town Hall, and the "Palazzo Pretorio," formerly the residence of the Chief Magistrate of the city. The Palazzo Comunale possesses, on the upper floors, very gracefully proportioned windows, which are supported on great arches, above one of which a shield displays the city arms, the "Lily of Florence," and the "Chequers" of Pope Leo X., carved in stone. The date of this palace is 1339; that of the Palazzo Pretorio fully a century earlier, 1220. In the charming courtyard of the Palazzo Pretorio, with its fine square columns and vaulted roof, the walls are covered with shields bearing the arms of many great men who served Pistoia well, in peace and in war. Among them we find the escutcheons of the Pitti, the Altoviti, and the Palmieri, with many others, carved in stone or in terra-cotta, often surrounded by those characteristic garlands of fruit and flowers so delightful in Florentine art, which were borne by great families well known in the annals of Tuscany. Beyond the Piazza Maggiore stands what is probably the best-known building in Pistoia, the "Ospedale del Ceppo" (Hospital of the Vine), which derives its name from the miraculous budding

of a withered vine, once planted on the spot where the hospital now stands. The foundation dates back to the thirteenth century; and during his Pontificate, Pope Leo X. took the hospital under his immediate protection, appointing as administrator a certain Brother Leonardo Buonafede, who was also administrator of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence. Architecturally the Ospedale del Ceppo is very simple,—a long two-storied house, the upper portion supported by a handsome loggia, which is the most remarkable feature of the building, for Giovanni della Robbia decorated it with an elaborate polychrome terra-cotta frieze, representing the "Seven Corporal Works of Mercy," while below it, in the spandrils of the arches, are medallions enclosed in garlands, some bearing coats of arms, also in strong colours. The frieze may be considered rather coarse in execution; but the groups in the panels are finely modelled. These panels represent "Clothing the Naked," "Visiting the Sick" (in this latter the patient lies in bed; above his head is a number, which gives this composition a modern touch, at the same time reminding us "there is nothing new under the sun"), "Feeding the Hungry," "Giving Drink to the Thirsty," "Sheltering Wanderers," "Visiting

THE HOSPITAL "DEL CEPPO," PISTOIA

Showing the frieze in terra-cotta by Giovanni della Robbia, and the Chapel door.

PISTOIA-

Prisoners," and "Burying the Dead." To the left of the great door stands the chapel attached to the hospital, with a terra-cotta lunette, within the arch of the door, representing the "Coronation of our Lady," in the simpler and purer blue-and-white glaze—a work which some critics attribute to Andrea or Giovanni della Robbia, others to a pupil, Benedetto Buglioni, author of the fine lunette above the door of the Church of the Badia in Florence.

A modern Italian art critic has rightly named Pistoia "The City of Pulpits." It is rich in pulpits, many of which are of very early date. Two very fine specimens of the twelfth century are those in "S. Michele in Groppoli," and in "S. Bartolomeo in Pantano." Both have panels carved in relief, and the supporting columns rest upon fine sculptured lions. The sculptor of the pulpit in S. Michele is unknown; but one of the group of "Como Masters," Guido da Como, carved the pulpit in S. Bartolomeo. He has supported it upon three columns, two on standing lions, while the third, the central one, rests on the bowed figure of a horned Lucifer. The beautiful and richly ornamented pulpit in S. Giovanni Fuorcivitas dates from a century later. Its two supporting columns rest, as in the

earlier designs, on lions, splendidly drawn, while the sculptor has shown originality in the arrangements by which the back of this pulpit leans on brackets fixed in the church wall. The sculptor was a Pisan, known as Fra Guglielmo, and his fine pulpit gives beauty to the church, which contains one of Lucca della Robbia's most perfect works, the group representing "The Salutation of Our Lady and St. Elizabeth." The Blessed Virgin, very youthful, yet full of dignity, bends over St. Elizabeth, who, having fallen at her feet, lifts up a worn and aged countenance to Our Lady's embrace. Most striking is the contrast—which the great master has emphasised with marvellous skill—between the two figures, one "full of years," the other tender and girlish, moulded in the pure white glaze with fine feeling and infinite grace. One other pulpit remains to be mentioned—that in the Church of St. Andrea, by Giovanni Pisano. Finely designed, and carved with scenes from New Testament history, surrounded by angels, prophets, and sibyls, it is a worthy example of the great Pisan master's work.

In such a slight sketch it is not possible to describe even the half of the architectural beauties of Pistoia, every corner of which is full of interest.

It is a city of great carvings and of fine forms, and possesses examples of nearly every period of early architecture. Its ancient tenth-century churches are rich in remarkable work of that period, in quaint groups adorning architrave and porch; and they mingle with the later Pisan school, with its fine ornament and upspringing arches, its slender columns and wealth of carved design; and with Early Florentine Renaissance work, decorating, as with some delicate embroidery, church and tower and palace. To the mind of the lover of Architecture and Sculpture, Pistoia must ever remain a memory of intense delight, irresistibly drawing his footsteps back to the ancient city surrounded by the mountains and folded in the green Tuscan vineyards.

THE PLAIN OF THE ARNO FROM BELLOSGUARDO, LOOKING WEST

A stormy autumnal sunset.

XIV

PISA

THE PIAZZA DEL' DIUOMO, PISA

Showing the great group of buildings, Baptistery, Cathedral, and Leaning Tower. To the right is a funeral procession. View in winter time.

XIV

PISA

My most vivid impression of Pisa is a trivial one connected with orange-blossom.

On a certain sunny May-day, when, after long years, we were renewing acquaintance with the dreamy old city, the perfume of orange flowers met us as we entered the streets. It was floating everywhere on the still air. Through the quaint white thoroughfares, in which the grass pushed its way unchecked between the paving-stones, each high garden wall was overtopped by the burnished green leaves of orange trees, starred with multitudes of small creamy flowers. Their sweet scent accompanied us on our way, leaving us only when the town lay behind, and we had reached the great open grassy space where stands that magnificent group of buildings renowned all the world over. On two sides of this square the ancient

battlemented walls of Pisa form an enclosure, in which are grouped the Cathedral, the Baptistery, and the "Leaning Tower," while behind them, unseen, lies the Campo Santo. Time and the sun's beneficent rays have mellowed these venerable marble monuments to a warm creamy hue. Solemn and perfect they stand, watching the generations come and go beneath their carved and fretted walls, a trinity of beauty, set between the emerald of the grass and the turquoise of the sky.

The curious, dome-shaped Baptistery is composed of three tiers,—perhaps symbolical, even as are the three crowns of the Papal tiara. The first and second are supported by wonderful slender columns, while the third is pierced by windows. The Cathedral is long and elegant in shape, and so perfect in proportion that the eye is deceived, believing it to possess greater length than in reality. Beside it stands the celebrated "Leaning Tower," otherwise the campanile, or belfry. It looks like some fairy tower, composed of tier upon tier of marble columns and delicate tracery, and inclines gently forward, as though weary of the burden of its own beauty. The most ancient of the three buildings is the Cathedral, which was begun in the year 1064, from designs by the architect Buschetto.

In 1596 it was threatened by fire, which partially destroyed some portions of the original structure. The Campanile dates from 1174. Its architects were Bonnano Pisano and William of Innsbruck. The architect of the Baptistery was Diotisalvi, who built it in 1152.

From this information we learn that these three buildings are the work of men who lived, as it were, in the very beginning of the great period of Italian architecture, and as we admire the marvels they created we ask ourselves, wondering, what could have been the secret of their success? A secret it certainly was—one, alas! that has not been learned by later generations. Perhaps it lay in the simple lives those old artists lived—lives which were in close touch with nature, full of earnest, humble-minded endeavour, and illuminated by a strong personal faith, which touched the hearts of men more deeply than we realise to-day.

The wealth of artistic genius which prevailed all over Italy from the eleventh until the fifteenth century is found at Pisa, where it has left such magnificent examples in the works of her famous sons, Andrea, Niccolò, and Giovanni Pisano, all three masters of that great school of sculpture and architecture which spread over northern Italy

during the Middle Ages, and probably had itself drawn inspiration from northern Gothic art. To the genius of Niccolò and Giovanni Pisano, Pisa owes many of her finest churches and her most stately palaces. To Giovanni is due much beautiful work in the Cathedral, and also the design for the Campo Santo; while the magnificent marble pulpit in the Baptistery, with its many carved reliefs, its wealth of ornament, and purity of design, is the work of Niccolò. Among the more important works in Pisa stand pre-eminent the great bronze doors of the Cathedral. They are set in the marble of the west front, beneath five tiers of graceful columns tapering into the gable which crowns the façade, and were designed by John of Bologna, to take the place of older doors destroyed by the fire of 1596. It would be difficult to convey an adequate idea of the beauty of these doors and of their fine reliefs, surrounded by garlands of fruit and flowers, among which birds and small four-footed creatures disport themselves. Just within these doors stand two holy-water stoups, bearing statues of our Lord and St. John Baptist, and beyond them stretches away the broad nave, flanked by a double row of monolith columns supporting the high roof, from which, just before the choir

STREET-SELLERS, PISA

An everyday market scene at Pisa, where country-women, having no fixed market stalls, stand selling their wares.

screen, hangs the fine bronze lamp, the swaying motion of which, tradition says, suggested to Galileo Galilei, that great son of Pisa, the theory of the pendulum. In the choir itself is to be found Sodoma's great picture, "The Sacrifice of Abraham," whose richness of tone and fine composition show the hand and brain of the great master of the "Life of St. Benedict." These frescoes adorn the cloisters of that most wonderful monastery, Monte Oliveto, near Siena, of which they are the crown and joy. In this picture of the Sacrifice of Abraham, the stern figure of the Patriarch, resigned to the terrible sacrifice of his beloved son, stands with head erect and eyes full of dawning hope, as if at that moment he heard the angel's voice calling him to stay his hand; while on the pyre Isaac kneels in anguished, awe-struck obedience. This group of Sodoma's lingers long in memory, side by side with the frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli in the Campo Santo hard by, where one would fain linger hour after hour, feasting one's eyes on the works adorning Giovanni Pisano's noble arcades, beneath the wide cloisters of that peaceful resting-place, where the sun touches with shafts of light the storied walls. The pierced Gothic arches and fine columns of the Campo Santo enclose an open

space, a very garden of rest, where tall cypress trees and a tangle of rose and lilac bushes are rooted in holy ground. For this is sacred earth from Mount Calvary itself, taken thence in the thirteenth century by Archbishop Lanfranchi of Pisa, who conveyed it in fifty-three ships to his city. Within the cloisters are many tombs and monuments sunk in the pavement or placed against the walls, and the names carved on them are of men and women of many degrees, and some names are great. As we passed slowly among them two beautiful carved sarcophagi, very ancient, and converted to Christian uses, claimed our attention. One contains the dust of the Roman Emperor, Henry VII., and the other the ashes of the Countess Beatrice, mother of Countess Matilda, that great ruler of Tuscany in the eleventh century. A little further, beneath a stone marked by another Roman sarcophagus, carved with sea divinities, sleeps Benozzo Gozzoli. Above his tomb glow the warm colours of his great frescoes, in which you may read the old Bible stories, told, as no one else could tell them, with that vigorous simplicity which was his greatest charm. In the first place he shows you the presumptuous Israelites building the Tower of Babel, which rises slowly in the middle of a wonderful fairy city of palaces

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STALLS IN A MARKET PLACE, PISA

and domes and towers; close by is the vintage in Noah's vineyard, the young men treading the wine-press, and groups of girls stepping gracefully, bearing baskets of grapes on their heads. Here he tells the story of Abraham, to whose rude tent come the three beautiful angels, who sit at table with him, while Sarah laughs in her tent door. A little further on Jacob and Rachel meet, and she gives him to drink from her pitcher, and they sit together at their marriage feast; while the next fresco depicts the Patriarch, with a train of men and women, flocks and herds, travelling homeward, and meeting his brother Esau, to whom he is reconciled.

We moved slowly on from one to the other, and the old, well-remembered stories continued to unfold themselves—Joseph and his brethren, Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, the journeyings of the Children of Israel, King David and his son Solomon, and the dazzling court of the Queen of Sheba. In all these frescoes—some in wonderful preservation, others, alas! much damaged—the artist has given free rein to his delicate fancies. Some groups he has placed in the middle of celestial cities or wide landscapes; others in magnificent palaces, on the marble balustrades of which peacocks spread their jewelled tails, and other gay-plumaged birds bask

in the sunshine. Others stand in marble courts where fountains play, or on green hillsides down which flow streams where deer come to drink beneath the shade of lofty trees.

From the frescoes of Benozzo Gozzoli we passed to those of Orcagna—to his celebrated "Triumph of Death" and his painful "Last Judgment." These were indeed a contrast to the earlier Old Testament stories, which had so delighted us with their tender warmth of fine feeling; for here we were shown, in most grim reality, unspeakable horrors, loathsome decay, and agonising pain. Such compositions as these of Orcagna were doubtless intended to strike terror to the hearts of the fourteenth-century sinners; but they probably grew accustomed to them, and doubtless preserved as cheerful faces when contemplating them as the kindly custodi of to-day, who smilingly present the visitor, as he passes to the gateway, in their graceful Italian fashion, with a few roses or a lilac branch from the "Terra santa di Gerusalemme."

The road back to the town from the Piazza del Duomo leads into the fine "Piazza dei Cavalieri" by an archway passing beneath an old palace, one portion of which is all that is supposed to remain of the "Tower of Famine." Tradition points to

this spot as that on which stood the tower in which Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, his two sons, and his two grandsons were starved to death. This hideous vengeance (magnificently described by Dante) was taken by the Ghibelline archbishop of Pisa against the Guelphic oppressor of the city when the wheel of fortune gave him his opportunity, which in this savage fashion he promptly seized.

On the north side of this square stands a palace built by Cosimo I., Grand-duke of Tuscany, from designs by Niccolò Pisano, for the knights of the Order of Pope St. Stephen, he being then their Grand Master, an office which was held by grand-dukes who came after him. A double staircase leads from the façade, which is adorned with busts of Grand Masters, down to the Piazza and to a picturesque fountain surmounted by a statue of Cosimo I., around which the Pisan women gather to draw water in fine copper vessels. Close by is the great church of the knights, whose red cross on a white ground can easily be mistaken for the badge of the knights of Malta. The history of this little-known Order of Pope St. Stephen is interesting, and their ancient church contains several curious pictures, describing the feats of arms done by the knights in wars

against the Turks, one conspicuous picture being their return from the battle of Lepanto. Overhead hang their banners, slowly crumbling away, having long outlived the brave knights who bore them, and their Order.

Beyond the Piazza dei Cavalieri stretches a maze of picturesque old streets, some colonnaded, and in the centre of these is the old market-place, which might once have been a cloister. It makes a charming picture, the long stalls piled up with fruit and vegetables striking a fine note of colour within the shade cast by the deep and vaulted arches.

Through the heart of Pisa flows the Arno, as it flows through the heart of Florence many miles away; and as we stood on the bridge called "Di Mezzo," on which in bygone years the sham fights peculiar to the Pisans took place, the river swept boldly beneath us, carrying on either side of its wide bow many fine palaces, and the delicate finials and marble fretwork of a tiny church, "Our Lady of the Thorn." It flows on past the grassy square on which stands the church of "S. Paolo á ripa d' Arno," on by the "Mariner's Tower," silhouetted against the deep-blue sky, until it reaches "Bocca d' Arno" and the unseen sea—"Bocca d' Arno," with its wind-swept pine-forest, and golden shore,

THE CHURCH OF SAN PAOLO A RIPA D'ARNO, PISA

Through the trees on the left is seen a distant view of the river.

where the gulls fly low over the blue Mediterranean, and the distant amethyst of the Carrara mountains melts into the cloud-wreaths of the sky—scenes dear to the magic brush of Giovanni Costa.

The history of Pisa is full of wars and tumults, since it first became a Roman colony in the year 150 B.C. In long wars with the Saracens the Pisans were victorious, and in the Crusades they had their part. The Republic reached the zenith of its power and prosperity in the twelfth century, when it possessed the whole sea-board from Spezia to Cività Vecchia. But with the downfall of the empire came the fall of Ghibelline Pisa. Its possessions lost, the city was seized by Florence, and after the sixteenth century was never again free and independent. Now, even with renewed prosperity, the fair town seems sleeping, dreaming of that great past when the ships of the Republic went down into the sea, carrying the trade of Pisa to all parts of the world.

But full of interest as the mediæval history of Pisa may be, for Anglo-Saxon men and women there is a closer link uniting Pisa to England, a link which made her, in the early years of the nineteenth century, peculiarly attractive to our wandering countrymen. At that time Percy Bysshe Shelley

with his wife and son left Florence to reside in Pisa, for the Florentine climate, owing to the keen winds which prevail there during winter and spring, had proved most unfavourable to the poet's delicate health. On the 29th of October 1820 he writes to Miss Clairemont from Pisa: "We have now removed to a lodging on the Lung'Arno, which is sufficiently commodious, and for which we pay thirteen sequins a month. It is next door to that marble palace, and is called 'Palazzo Galetti,' consisting of an excellent mezza-nino and of two rooms on the fourth floor, and all to the south, and with two fireplaces." The marble palace referred to in this letter is supposed to be the Palazzo Lanfreducci, Lung' Arno, easily distinguished by the mysterious inscription over the door, "Alla Giornata." Here, surrounded by a small circle of friends, among whom were the Williamses, and later Trelawney and Byron, the Shelleys lived. Life in Pisa was not exciting; but Shelley declares in 1821, in a letter written to his wife during an absence, "Our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted tree flourishes not." In August 1821, Shelley hired for Byron the palace which Mr. Hare calls Palazzo Toscanelli, No. 669 Lung' Arno; but, in his *Life of Shelley*, Mr. Edward Dowden, LL.D., always

calls it the Lanfranchi Palace. To this new home the author of *Childe Harold* came from Ravenna in the month of November; and about the same time the Shelleys moved into another house, immediately opposite Byron's palazzo, in which they had furnished an apartment, a house known as "Tre Palazzi di Chiesa." From this time there was constant intercourse between the two poets, and in January 1822 Shelley writes to his friend Mr. Peacock in England:—

"Lord Byron is established here, and we are constant companions. No small relief this, after the dreary solitude of the understanding and the imagination in which we past the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts. We live, as usual, tranquilly. I get up, or at least wake, early, read and write till two, dine, go to Lord Byron's and ride or play billiards, as the weather permits, and sacrifice the evening either to light books or whoever happens to drop in."

Lord Byron gave weekly dinners at Palazzo Lanfranchi, at which he entertained his travelling friends, and Shelley would often be present at these gatherings; but the picture he has left of them is not nearly so pleasant as that of his daily life.

He writes: "My nerves are generally shaken to pieces contemplating the rest making themselves vats of claret, etc., till three o'clock in the morning." The sensitive nature of the poet could hardly be at home in such scenes as these. In the beginning of the year 1822 Trelawney arrived in Pisa; and in June the Leigh Hunts were there, Shelley having the joy of meeting his dearest friend once more, never dreaming it was for the last time, or foreseeing the terrible catastrophe which was so soon after to deprive the poet and Mr. Williams of their lives. Shelley's passionate love for the water urged him on to it whenever an opportunity occurred, and in this taste he found a fellow-spirit in Williams, with whom he often sailed, both on the Arno and on the sea, in more or less seaworthy boats. The winter before that fatal summer which saw the small party of friends settled at the "Casa Magni," on the Bay of Lerici, Shelley and Williams ordered a boat to be built for them at Genoa, by a certain Captain Roberts. The details were arranged one evening in Pisa, described by Mrs. Shelley: "Thus on that night—one of gaiety and thoughtlessness—Jane's (Mrs. Williams) and my miserable destiny was decided. We then said laughing, each to the other, 'Our husbands decide

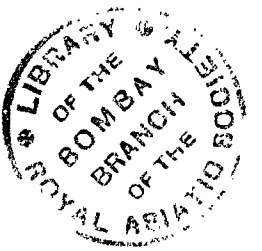
STREET STUDY IN PISA

Under the arcades of the Borgo.

without asking our consent, or having our concurrence, for, to tell you the truth, I hate this boat, though I say nothing.' Said Jane, 'So do I, but speaking would be vain, and only spoil their pleasure.'" It was in this hated boat that the two husbands, Shelley and Williams, set sail, one July morning, on the voyage from which they were never to return.

XV

VIAREGGIO



THE SHIP-BUILDING YARD, VIAREGGIO

XV

VIAREGGIO

ANY one in search of tranquillity, complete repose from social duties, leisure to do whatever he or she likes best, from the not necessarily early hour of rising until bedtime,—to such a man or woman let me recommend Viareggio in the dull season. This aspect of Viareggio is the only one I know; and though to others the little town may wear a deserted look in early spring, to me it is a haunt of peace, which induces that charming feeling one has when there are no duties waiting to be performed—only long sunny hours in which to enjoy mornings, afternoons, and evenings, of *dolce far niente*. To appreciate all that is meant by this delightful Italian expression, one thing is necessary at Viareggio—either to have a sympathetic companion, or to be alone. Otherwise one might find oneself in a trying position. It is impossible to

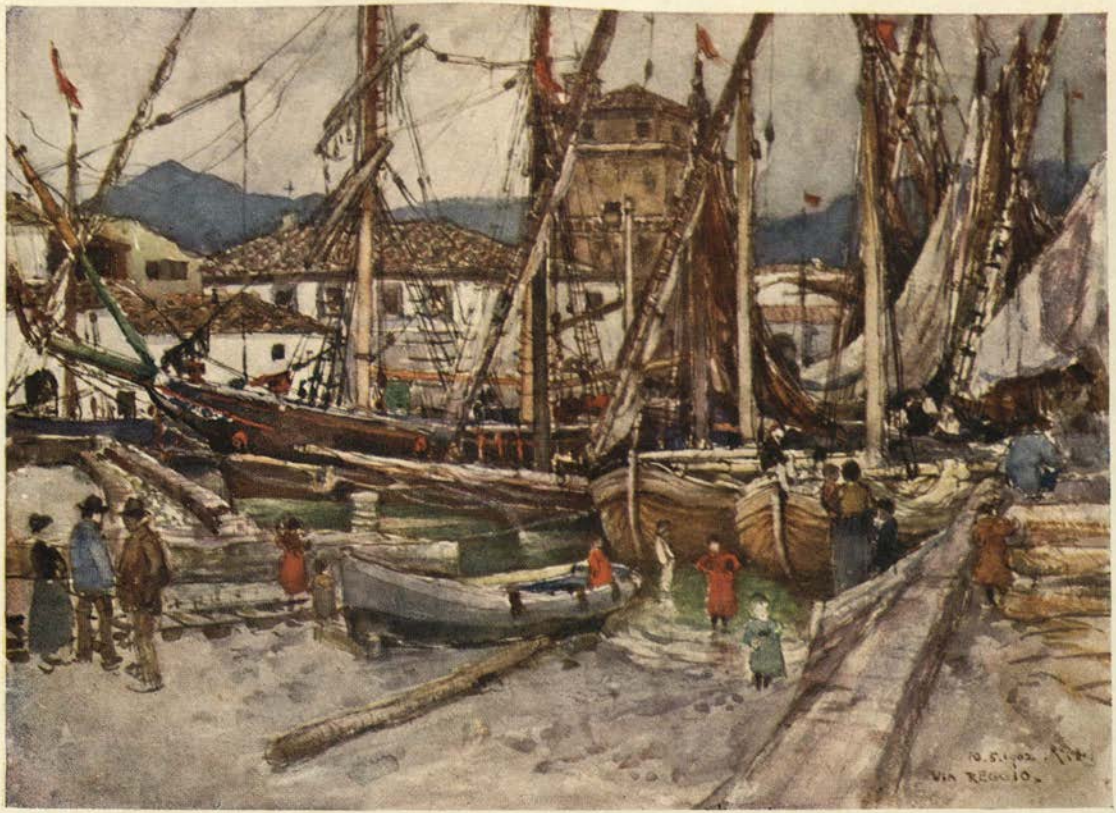
lose any one here, and short of locking oneself into the hotel bedroom, which is "home" for the time being, one could not shake off an uncongenial associate.

Viareggio is situated on a beautiful corner of the Mediterranean coast, which here forms a series of shallow bays. All along the sandy beach are vast stretches of pine-woods, and behind them rise the great ranges of the Carrara mountains. The tall umbrella pines catch the sunlight on their spreading tops in a thousand different tones. It reddens their wind-bent trunks, and touches with gold the gorse and the vivid green of the young grass at their feet.

In spring-time the Carrara mountains are still snow-sprinkled, and their jagged peaks stand boldly up against the deep blue of the sky. Drifting clouds wreath them, and on their slopes white red-roofed villages perch, each clustering about a tall church tower, and making a patch of light on the amethyst-coloured mountain-side. The pictures framed by the tall pine-stems are for ever changing. Here, on the one hand, are the mysterious mountains; and on the other is the sea, glittering and sparkling, beyond the golden sands, through the gloom of the woods—sometimes blue, and sometimes purple, and sometimes green, while the rhythm of the plash of

CROWDED SHIPPING IN THE BASIN AT VIAREGGIO

The prison tower is seen through the masts.


10.5.1902
VIA REGGIO

the waves on the sea-shore answers the sigh of the breeze in the tree-tops.

Viareggio proper, which lies away from the pine woods, is a small fishing town with a population highly reputed for honesty, theft being unknown. The town is composed of rows of straight streets with low green-shuttered houses, bounded on the north by the railway line that runs to Genoa, and on the south by the sea. Those quiet little houses in the broad sunny streets wear a home-like attractive air, though most commonplace in architecture and with little variety about them. All show the same peculiar features—a large door with a window on either side, three windows above, and a flat roof. The ground-floor windows go down to the street pavement, and are thrown wide open all day long in fine weather; no precautions are taken to keep people out. Once I saw a low wooden barrier fitted inside an open window; but it looked a very inadequate protection, and easy to be stepped across. It appeared to me that the only reason for its presence must be a desire to keep out the Viareggio dogs.

The inhabitants live principally by fishing, and their life hovers round their boats, the market, and a shipbuilding yard. Some of the men, however, are

rope-makers, and there is a lace-making industry among the women and girls.

The shipbuilding yard covers a broad green common, and presents a scene full of activity and bustle. Here all day long men work hard at the building or repairing of large and small coasting vessels and fishing smacks. Some saw great tree trunks, shaping them into the ribs and beams of ships, which others fit into huge skeleton-like hulls, poised high up on the stocks, in every stage of construction, getting ready for the sea. Passing alongside the building yard, running up from the sea, is the canal reaching to Pisa, and on its bank stands the most striking object in Viareggio, a great square tower, which serves as the town prison. This tower stands now upon dry ground, but in old days must have been surrounded by the sea, before the water receded.

One may speculate a great deal about the origin of this old tower, which is uncertain. It may have been built by the Genoese, in the great days of their power, or (and this appears the most attractive tradition) Castruccio Castracane, the great condottiere, may have built it for a fortress. This Castruccio Castracane was a splendid soldier, and conquered Lucca, close by, which he ruled well for

HARBOUR OF VIAREGGIO

The ancient Tower is supposed to have been built by Castruccio Castracane. Vessels unloading at the Custom House.

the twelve years preceding his death, in 1328. Thus there is a bit of romance in Viareggio, supplied by this ancient tower; but there is nothing more of historical interest—no church, no palace, and no gallery. For these the traveller must take train to Pisa, or to Lucca, where he will find plenty to see, and art and beauty enough for a lifetime of study. However, for those who may be glad to put away for a time all "mind-improving" study, the life of Viareggio offers every opportunity for rest—for those who stroll through the shady walks of the "pineta," or those who sit in the shelter of one of the thatched log-huts on the sea-shore. But a tragic memory haunts this bay, and at evening, as one sits watching the sea spreading away to the peaceful sunset horizon, one can hardly realise the sudden fury which swept it, that July day, now more than eighty years ago, and which claimed as its victim the poet Shelley. It is not far from Viareggio to Lerici and San Terenzo, where the Shelleys shared a villa, the summer of his death, with their friends the Williams. In her letter to Mr. Gisborne, describing the circumstances of her husband's end, Mary Shelley expresses her hatred of this villa, which, she says, "is desolate"; but Shelley was delighted with it, and with the beauty of the neighbourhood.

On July 1, 1822, Shelley, accompanied by Mr. Williams, set sail for Pisa in the boat which, in one of his letters, he described as being swift and beautiful. They were never seen alive again by the two distracted women who waited for their return, between hope and fear, until July 25, when news came of the catastrophe and that the bodies had been washed ashore—Shelley's at Viareggio, and Williams' some miles farther away, near the tower of Migliorini. At that time the quarantine laws in Tuscany were very strict, and compelled all bodies cast up on the coast to be burned for fear of plague infection. So the last sad offices were carried out as the law prescribed, by those devoted friends, Byron, Hunt, and Trelawney, on the beach of Viareggio; but the exact spot remains unknown. A bust of Shelley —not altogether unpleasing—has been erected to his memory, on a small but prominent piazza in the town, looking towards the sea. This mark of appreciation on the part of the Italians is highly gratifying as coming from Dante's countrymen.

It is not to be imagined that Viareggio is the same quiet little place we know, and enjoy, all the year round. Far from it! It has its "season" (I trust I may never see it), when all the hotels

THE PIAZZA AT PIETRA SANTA, NEAR VIAREGGIO

Showing the Cathedral and ancient walls. A study in spring.

Pietro Sarti

and pensions are full to overflowing, and the attractive little houses are let to visitors. All the little wooden booths on the Piazza d' Azeglio, facing the sea, which are for the most part closed in spring, are then thrown open, as are also the long lines of bathing establishments running down across the sands. The theatre, also made of wood, and the race meetings provide amusement: so it must indeed be a different Viareggio from the quiet little place beloved of artists in the early months of the year. Then one meets many brothers of the pencil and the brush working busily in the little harbour full of shipping, or higher up the canal, where the boats unload, or down in the ship-building yard. Besides these there are endless beauties in the scented pine-woods to tempt them, and all the wonderful effects of sea and sky. To the west lies Pietra Santa, where also many an attractive subject can be found on the fine piazza, with the quaint, old-world city gate, the façade of the church, and the curious line of fountains against the hill, which rises steeply behind the little town.

I have said there are no "sights" in Viareggio; but this is not strictly the case. There are two, of an unusual nature, which can be recommended

as picturesque and interesting. One is rope-making; the other is eel-fishing in early spring. Rope-making presumably continues all the year round, and to the ignorant observer appears to be primitive in its methods. It can be seen and studied on a large piece of waste ground lying between the pine-woods and the western end of the town. First one's attention is called to a row of wheels, worked by small boys, who turn them from six o'clock in the morning until six in the evening, for the large sum of four soldi—two-pence—a day! The flax for the ropes is wound round these wheels at one end, and round distaffs, carried by men, at the other. These distaffs are very large, and in the distance look like tall furled banners; and the men walk backwards and forwards with them, manipulating the flax as they do so. This is one process. Another transfers the small wheel to a flat cart drawn by oxen, which is then worked by four men, who drag the strands of twisted flax backwards and forwards. This seems to be much harder work than the simpler process we were watching in the first instance, as the rope is now nearer completion, and thicker and heavier. The carts creak loudly as they move slowly along, the wheels hum busily, the men call to one another,

THE PINE WOODS AND CARRARA MOUNTAINS AT VIAREGGIO

In the foreground the rope-makers are shown at work.

and there is a good deal of laughter and conversation among them; but the heat is very great on the waste patch of ground, and the sun beats down pitilessly on the rope-makers and their patient oxen as we leave them to their toil.

Two long parallel piers form the entrance to Viareggio harbour, and between them runs the canal to Pisa. At this period of the year the young eels, about two inches long, make their way from the sea to the "Palude," or marshes, up this canal. Judging by the myriad of fry caught, one concludes that the marshes must be infested by eels. The fishermen line each side of the pier after dark, every man armed with a long pole, ending in a small net, and with a hand lantern. They dip the nets into the sea, bringing them out full of little yellow wriggling eels, emptying their catch into baskets by their sides. The effect of all the lanterns stretching away in two long lines, disappearing against the darkness beyond the pier, is that of a gay illumination, and the men fish in silence, which is only broken by the rhythmical dip of the nets into the water at their feet. The eels fetch sixty centesimi a kilo in the market, and are reported excellent to eat fried in oil. It is amusing to watch the men plunging their nets into the sea,

and bringing them out again, managing the long awkward-looking handles with wonderful dexterity. The lanterns flicker like a line of flame, revealing the dark forms in the mystery of the night, while some sudden flash discovers a handsome face beneath a red fisherman's cap of the ancient Phrygian form. The last time we strolled down to the pier to see the eel-fishing there were but few lanterns, and only disappointed fishermen; for the night was bright and windy, and no eels were coming up.

But our quiet days in Viareggio are coming to an end. Let us enjoy them so long as we may, in the scented pine-woods ablaze with gorse, or in our log-hut by the sea, watching the little curly waves —colour of chrysoprase—breaking on the yellow sands of the Mediterranean shore.

COASTING VESSELS IN THE HARBOUR
AT VIAREGGIO

The Carrara mountains in the distance.

XVI

LUCCA

XVI

LUCCA

THE railroad from Viareggio to Lucca passes through very beautiful scenery crossing the Pisan marshes for miles. These stretch to the sea on the south and to the mountains on the north; and are intersected by narrow water-ways, and by a very important canal, which extends as far as Pisa. The colour in these marshes is lovely, —patches of coarse grass, now green, now yellow, alternating with submerged rice-fields, reflecting the sky in soft tints of palest blue and pearly grey. The white sails of small vessels glide mysteriously among the fields on their way to Pisa, and, far away to the extreme right as we watched their course, we caught a glimpse of Torre del Lago, with its conspicuous tower and half-concealed lake.

Our train left Viareggio station at noon, and, like all good Italian trains, took its time, to our

impatience the journey appearing endless. The waits at all the little roadside stations were varied by very long, dark tunnels,—for the country after we left the marshes was wild, hilly, and wooded,—and we came quite suddenly on Lucca when we finally ran into the station. The first sight of Lucca is most interesting, for the little city still preserves its mediæval appearance. It is entirely surrounded by the original walls and bastions, and above their splendid masonry rise beautiful church spires and the red roofs of clustered palaces and houses. Built of red brick, the strong and weather-beaten walls of Lucca have guarded the city for many a century. They protected her first when she was a small, free republic,—not always with success, for they could not save her from Pisa, her powerful neighbour, who conquered and held her in bondage until she ransomed herself from the Emperor Charles IV., in the fourteenth century.

From that time Lucca remained free and independent behind her great walls, until Napoleon came and incorporated her in the kingdom of his sister Eliza. But the Emperor fell, and, his sister sharing his misfortunes, her kingdom was divided, the Powers bestowing Lucca on the Bourbon Parma princes. By and by it reverted to the

Grand-duchy of Tuscany, and finally to United Italy.

Now in these later years the walls of Lucca, their duty done, have exchanged cannon and forts for long shady walks with pleasant seats beneath groups of tall trees, and hither the citizens come to take the air and to enjoy the lovely landscape lying beyond. The railway station of Lucca is outside the town,—a not unusual arrangement in Italy, where so many cities are built on hills,—and to reach the principal Piazza on which the hotel stands, we had to pass through one of the fine old gates, which gave one some idea of the thickness and fine masonry of the walls.

Through one or two picturesque narrow streets we made our way, and in a few minutes reached the principal square and the celebrated old inn. This, the Hôtel de l'Univers, must formerly have been the palace of some rich and noble family—judging by the fine proportions of the rooms, especially one decorated and panelled suite, that might have been the great reception rooms of a Lucchese lord of the olden times. We looked with much interest at these old chambers—at the delicate branches of coloured fruit and flowers surrounding the panels of doors and windows, and

at the graceful scrolls and arabesques continuing the same decorative scheme on the ceiling,—all wrought in raised gesso work. Very attractive is the whole effect, though now the rooms have changed in character and wear that forlorn air of faded ancient grandeur which seems full of the mystery of the past.

On leaving the hotel our first visit was to the Church of St. John the Baptist, standing on a small piazza close by. Two women passed us as we stood examining the twelfth-century carving on the architrave of the door, representing our Lord and the twelve Apostles. The women were carrying their babies to be baptized; and it amused us to notice that these diminutive Lucchese were wrapped not in white-and-gold, as Florentine infants usually are, but in warmest crimson, making a patch of brilliant colour against the dark old church. The interior of S. Giovanni contains little of special interest—only some fine supporting columns, a thirteenth-century fresco with the colours still fresh, and the remains of an ancient font in the north transept.

This transept was the baptistery, and the ancient font is placed immediately beneath a delightful little dome, high up in the lantern of which a wallflower

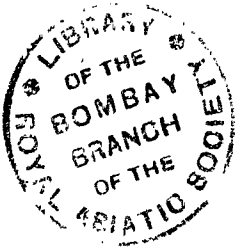
bloomed in a chink of the ancient masonry—a triumph of Dame Nature over the handiwork of man.

We left the mothers and babies patiently waiting for the priest as we turned away and found a side door which led to the Piazza San Martino, where stands the Cathedral of Lucca and the palace of the archbishop. Great trees rise above the picturesque high walls surrounding the "Arcivescovado," within which a garden can be divined full of shady walks and delicious roses; while on the side towards the Piazza runs a terrace, built on the level of the wall, to which access seemed to be given from a window on the first floor. The terrace is all enclosed by a pergola, covered in the summer-time by green vines shading this pleasant place, where the bishop doubtless sits and rests in the cool of the evening when the day's work is done. To the left of the Episcopal garden the Piazza broadens out again, adorned with a marble fountain; and, facing this, there is a little church.

We had no more time, however, to linger and admire; for the days of March are none too long, and there was much we wished to see ere dusk.

The wonderful west front of Lucca Cathedral,

built in 1204, has often been described; for it is one of the chief glories of northern Italian architecture. It is decorated with three tiers of beautiful galleries, supported on columns rich with lovely ornament. A fine group representing St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, sharing his cloak with a beggar, stands above the deep portico, within which we stood for some time, admiring the perfect symmetry of its proportions and the charming effect which the Piazza gave, framed between the fine columns and arches. Thence we passed into the twilight of the cathedral, so full of rare beauty lavished upon it by the devotion of the Lucchese and by the great sculptor, Matteo Civitale. This remarkable genius of the fifteenth century was a citizen of whom the people of Lucca may well be proud. He was a worthy rival of the best Florentine sculptors of the fifteenth century, and he enriched his native town with some of the loveliest work to be found in all Italy. In the cathedral nave are two finely wrought holy-water stoups,—the one on the right surmounted by the Holy Child, His hand raised in blessing; that on the left by the symbolical lamb. Thus from the threshold of the cathedral Civitale's art meets and rivets the attention, and from the holy-water stoups one is led on by it, step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THE WEST FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL OF SAN MARTINO LUCCA

A procession is crossing the Piazza during the Rogations. A forenoon study.

Rogation Day
S. MARTINO. LUCCA

by step: first to the splendid pulpit; then to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where two exquisite angels kneel perpetually in adoration; then, outside its fine iron gates, to the tombs of Domenico Bertini, Civitale's friend and patron, and of the papal secretary Pietro da Noceta, and also to the altar of S. Regulus. Thence we moved slowly to the beautiful "Tempietto," or little temple, the shrine which holds Lucca's greatest treasure, the "Volto Santo"—the "Holy Face of our Lord."

Would it were possible to reproduce in words the manner in which the old sacristan of Lucca Cathedral recited to us the legend of the "Volto Santo." For fifty years he has held his responsible post, and many and varied must have been the travellers who have visited Lucca Cathedral under his auspices. Over and over again for half a century has he repeated the well-known tale; yet he tells it to the visitor of to-day with unwearied vigour and freshness, drawing the attention of his hearers to all the events of the legend, which are depicted in an ancient fresco on the west wall. Briefly, the legend is as follows: Nicodemus (he who came to our Lord by night "for fear of the Jews") was, in a vision, commanded by an angel to carve a crucifix with the true likeness of the

Saviour in cedar-wood. The tree was felled, and Nicodemus began his task; but so deeply did he feel his unworthiness (for how could he, a sinner, dare to reproduce the features of the Son of God?) that the face remained unfinished until one day, on awaking from a deep sleep, he found that the likeness had been perfected by angelic hands. For long years the precious relic was preserved at Jerusalem, though it was often in danger of falling into the hands of profane men—until at length, persecution becoming more and more terrible and bloody, the pious guardians of the "Holy Face" removed it secretly to the sea-coast, and there, placing it in a small boat, consigned it to the winds and waves, as being more merciful than man. Then it came about that, far away in Tuscany, the Bishop of Lucca in a dream saw a boat with a precious burden speeding towards the coast, and finally lying in the little seaport of Luni. Impressed by the vision, the bishop sent several trustworthy men to Luni to rescue the boat and its contents; but whenever they tried to approach it the craft drifted away, and they were unable to overtake it. The ambassadors returned to Lucca and reported these things to the bishop, who, feeling sure that the strange boat must carry a very holy burden, went forth himself, with incense

and banners, and accompanied by many of his clergy. When they arrived at Luni the boat suffered the bishop to approach it and to take possession of the "Volto Santo." The sacred relic was solemnly brought ashore, when a dispute arose. The people of Luni claimed the treasure as theirs: had it not been brought to their coast? Then, on the other hand, the Lucchesi said, "It is ours. Our bishop had the vision, and the relic is clearly destined for Lucca." The dispute could not easily be decided; but at length it was agreed to confide the "Volto Santo" to a cart drawn by oxen, which should be left to go whithersoever their instinct led them. The oxen immediately turned to the road that led to Lucca, and never rested until they reached the spot where now stands the cathedral. The joy of the Lucchesi was unbounded. They conveyed the "Holy Face" with much pomp to the ancient church of San Michele; but it would not rest there, and was discovered in the morning on the spot where the oxen had originally halted. This made it clear to the citizens that it was the will of God they should build a church to His glory on this spot, to contain the "Volto Santo." So the cathedral was built, and dedicated to San Martino, the patron saint of Lucca. Two centuries later

Civitale built the lovely classic Tempietto, where the cedar-wood crucifix of Nicodemus is now kept, and is exposed for the veneration of the faithful on certain festivals of the Church—notably on the 3rd of May, the Feast of the Finding of the Cross, and on the 14th of September, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

One remarkable old custom connected with Lucca is worth recording—the burning of flax, when the Bishop of Lucca pontificates at High Mass. When the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" is reached, the flax, previously wound about a cresset kept suspended in the nave, is set alight by a canon, and as the inflammable material flares up and then burns away the choir chant "Sic transit gloria Mundi." This ceremony is carried out wherever the Bishop of Lucca may pontificate, in or outside his own diocese. It is a privilege conferred upon his successors in the See by Pope Alexander II., who was raised from the bishopric of Lucca to St. Peter's Chair.

It would take too much space to describe all the beautiful work, not Civitale's, still remaining in Lucca Cathedral; but it is impossible to pass by Jacopo della Quercia's recumbent figure of Ilaria Marchesa di Caretto, wife of a Guinici

PIAZZA SAN MICHELE, LUCCA

Showing an angle of the great west front of the church, and an ancient archway.

S. Michele a Lucca

who was Lord of Lucca. The sweet face and peaceful attitude of this lovely lady is not to be easily forgotten. She was very young when she died, after only three years of happy married life; and round her tomb child-angels play, and at her feet her dog lies, while she appears to sleep tranquilly beneath the beautiful folds of her drapery.

From the cathedral it is not very far to what was once the Grand-ducal Palace of Lucca, covering one side of the Piazza del Giglio, where stands an ugly statue of the last Duchess of Lucca (Maria Louisa of Bourbon) and her son, who were greatly beloved by their people, and did much good to the little state. The palace is vast; but a custode met us and guided us to the picture gallery, which did not prove very interesting. From the palace we strolled through quaint sunny streets, full of colour and lined with picturesque dark little shops, until we came to San Michele.

The façade of this church filled Ruskin with admiration, and he wrote much in its praise. Very beautiful we thought it as we stood in the little Piazza and gazed upward at the wonders of its carving and the rich fancy of its design. The marbles of the varied columns were all bathed in yellow sunlight, while the great bronze Archangel

above them all stood out solemnly against the vivid blue of the sky. On the western angle of the church, just before the doors are reached, is a little shrine, beneath the canopy of which stands one of the tenderest of Civitale's Madonnas, with the Divine Child in her arms. But only a short time remained to us after leaving San Michele, which we spent in endeavouring to gain some knowledge of the outside aspect of the charming little town. We wandered slowly through many picturesque brightly-coloured streets, by splendid tenth- and twelfth-century churches and palaces, until at length we reached the great walls once more.

Wearied, there we rested, watching the evening light falling on the wide landscape beyond the great bastions until it was time to return to the hotel, and so to the station, and back in the warm night to hospitable Viareggio.

XVII

OF THE PEOPLE AND SOME CUSTOMS

STUDY OF MULE, WITH DECORATED
HARNESS, AND ROPE NOSE-BAG

PORTA ROMANA.
FIRENZE. 20.4.92

XVII

OF THE PEOPLE AND SOME CUSTOMS

THOSE who know and live among the Tuscan people do not fail to realise that, though they may possess the faults common to Latin races, yet there is much charm to be met with in the national character. This combines a sunny nature with real refinement of manner and taste, producing on the stranger an impression that the Tuscans must all be persons of blue blood. The glibness of their tongues is often deceptive; yet once inspire in a servant, for example, who comes from a respectable family an attachment to your person, and you will find that he, or she, is capable of a devotion and fidelity which cannot easily be matched. Cleanliness is to be found to an extent which might astonish the visitor, and there is among the poorer classes a sense of self-respect which leads them to make many sacrifices in order to

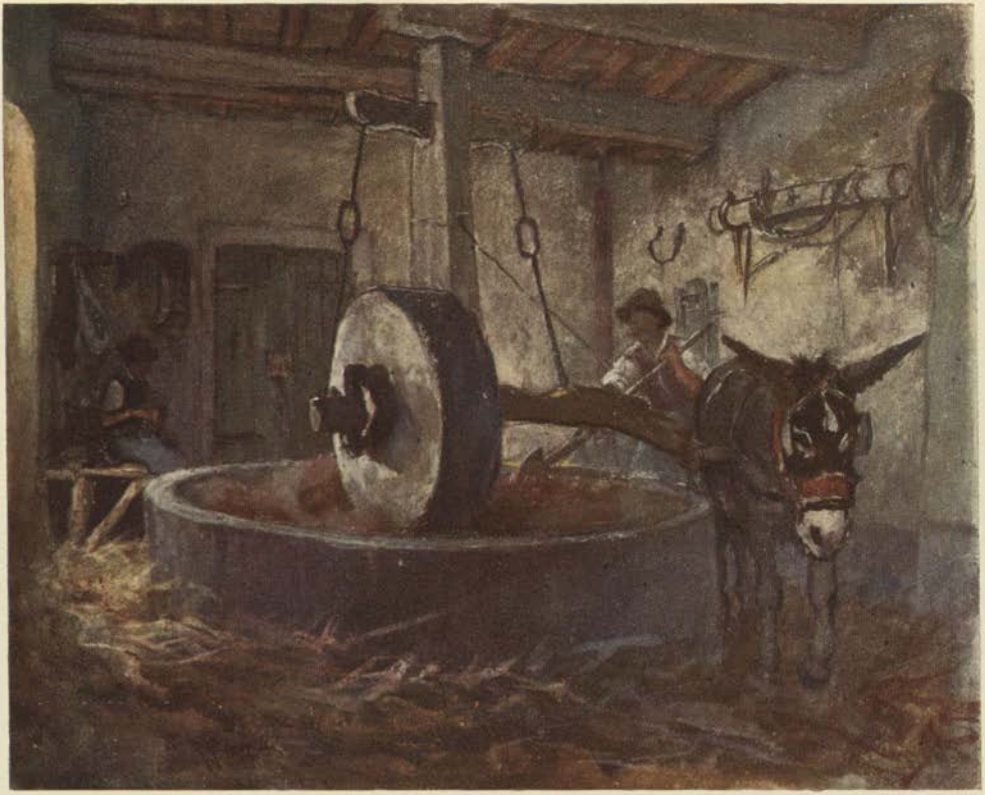
present a good appearance to the world, however meagre may be their fare, or however ragged their garments within the four walls of home. Thrift is considerably encouraged by the Government, who have established well-administered Savings Banks ("Case di Risparmio") in the towns, although, on the other hand, they have legalised the form of gambling known as "Lotto," which absorbs many hard-earned "quattrini."

In the matter of general education Italy is still distinctly behind many other countries, even though schools are increasing and improving; and to the lower class of conscripts the years appropriated by military service are of great benefit as a civil education besides being a training in arms. For women there are lay as well as convent schools; but by far the larger portion of educational establishments still remains in the hands of the religious Orders.

Morals and religion do not come within the scope of this book; but one thing very noticeable in Italy, as it is in most Catholic countries, may be mentioned—that is the great part which the Church plays in the daily life of the people. Every holiday is connected with the Church, either as being one of the great festivals or as the feast-day of the local saint—sometimes, perhaps, the anni-

TUSCAN OIL-PRESS

Crushing the olives.



versary of a deliverance in olden days from the Black Death, or from some national disaster; or, maybe, it is the fulfilling of a solemn vow, in which case there is usually a religious procession, often at an interval of several years, according to the conditions of the vow. On the civil side we have the festival of the "Statuto," and a display of bunting marks royal birthdays and other anniversaries connected with the Royal House, and with victories which won the union of Italy. These "holidays," however, are not observed in the same manner as are religious festivals—that is, by resting from servile work, as the Church prescribes.

The year's holidays begin with "Capo d' Anno" (New Year's day), continuing with others at intervals through the months. With many of them quaint, old-world customs are connected and still observed, though, in certain instances, processions and customs have had to be abolished, for more or less important reasons. Among these last may be mentioned the "Battle of the Bridge" at Pisa, of which Sir Horace Mann records in the early years of the nineteenth century that a riot had taken place between the combatants over the blessing of the banners. He concluded that this disturbance would bring about the abolition of the battle, and this proved true.

Among other well-known pageants forbidden in modern times is the Prato "Good Friday Procession of the Mysteries," which ceased to be held five-and-twenty years ago, owing to an unfortunate anti-clerical riot. For this same reason, the processions of Corpus Christi also have had to be restricted in the towns of Italy.

In country places, however, parish processions for the great Feast of Corpus Christi continue to be a feature during the Octave, and an occasion for general holiday-making, people going from parish to parish to take part in them. There are few more striking, even beautiful sights than one of these processions, especially when it comes at dusk, as so frequently happens. Let us try and picture one of these. About the door of some little wayside chapel, where pious hands have prepared an Altar of Repose, on such an occasion small groups of people gather. From the town and the outlying suburbs a stream of holiday-clad folk pass them, and exchange greetings, gay voices rising and falling in the quiet evening. The western sky has turned to crimson and gold before the chimes of distant bells announce that the procession has started, and soon it appears at the bend of the white road, headed by the village

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

Procession halting for Benediction at dusk at the Chapel of the Villa dell' Ombrellino S. Domenico di Fiesole.

FEAST OF CORPUS DOMINI — S. DOMENICO - NAPOLI -

band, playing one of those sweet, sad marches which seem peculiar to Tuscany. Pacing slowly behind the band come the confraternities representing different parishes, each little company preceded by its crucifix, and accompanied by tall gilt lanterns carried on poles, many of very beautiful workmanship. Following these come the Children of Mary, in filmy veils and blue ribbons, and black-and-white Dominican monks, and then—the central object of devotion—a white-and-gold Baldacchino, beneath which the parish priest walks bearing the Host, with head bowed, surrounded by clergy and acolytes, while many voices rise and fall in chanted Psalms, and the flames of numberless tapers shine palely in the golden light of sunset. Slowly the long line reaches the little chapel, as the last "Gloria Patri" dies away. The priests enter, and on the quiet air floats out the "Tantum ergo," immediately taken up by the people outside—for the small space in the chapel will not contain them all; so they kneel on the road—white-and-blue Children of Mary, confraternities, monks, men, women, and children—waiting for the Benediction. After this pause the procession starts again, and winds away between the grey walls and the olive trees, back to the church. The dusk has turned to violet now, and the tapers

pierce it with little points of yellow flame; forms grow more and more indistinct, and the music and the chanting voices die gently away, until not even the sharp warning sound of the little bell preceding the Blessed Sacrament can be distinguished. After the final Benediction in the church those who do not care to visit the little village fair, held in honour of the occasion, turn homeward, as the first stars come out in the deep sapphire of the evening sky.

In contrast to such a pageant as this are the sad processions of the Mysteries of the Passion ("Christo Morto"), which mark the evenings of Good Friday. Slow and solemn, to the chanting of the Liturgical Reproaches, these processions wind through the roads at dusk. The yellow glare of torches illuminate representations of our Lord in the Sepulchre, escorted by priests in funeral vestments, and carried shoulder-high by Brothers of Mercy, while black-robed women carry "Our Lady of Dolours," and the casques of mounted Roman soldiers suddenly glitter in the blackness, where the torch-light falls upon them. Mystery and awe and sorrow oppress the air; and the faces of the crowds lining the roadway reflect that feeling, joined to a quiet orderly reverence, not easily to

be forgotten by a stranger who witnesses it for the first time.

Carnival in Florence begins at Christmas, and continues until Shrove Tuesday. It is the season for entertainments and festivities, though the masked balls of past generations have lost their aristocratic character, as society no longer takes a part in them. Epiphany is the children's feast, when they are told that an old woman, called "La Befana," whose legend resembles that of the Wandering Jew, fills their shoes during the night with the longed-for gifts which they discover in them on the morning of the "Three Kings." Another treat for the children consists in being taken to buy little glass trumpets at the Epiphany Fair, on which they blow shrill blasts, to the discomfort of their long-suffering elders.

With the beginning of Lent all popular entertainments cease. Their place is taken by the Lenten fairs, which are held every Sunday at one or other of the city gates, and are a feature of the penitential season in Florence. The first three of these fairs are held on the Piazza San Gallo, where one of the ancient gates of Florence still stands, close to the great rococo triumphal arch, erected in honour of the Emperor Francis II., husband of

Maria Theresa, and his entry into the city. These three fairs are known respectively as the "Fair of the Curious," the "Fair of the Furious," and the "Fair of the Lovers." In the eighteenth century they were very fashionable, all the great world visiting them, from the Grand-duke himself, with his chamberlains, downward. The fourth of these fairs is held at Porta di Prato, and is of no interest; but the fifth causes the greatest excitement among the people. It is known as the "Fair of Contracts," when marriages previously arranged are announced, and happy couples meet and receive the congratulations of relations and friends. The last fair, called that "of the Rejected," is held at S. Frediano, and let us hope that it brings to disappointed lovers the consolation that they seek. Many objects, eatable and otherwise, are sold at the Lenten fairs, and among the former are quantities of nuts blessed by the Church and little cakes known as "Quaresimale," which latter, like the Roman "Maritozzi," are not to be obtained at any other time of year.

But of all the yearly events in Florence the Easter-eve "Festival of the Dove" in the cathedral is probably the most widely known, as it is also the most original and unique. Few who have witnessed

it are likely to forget the stir and bustle of the morning, the thrill of excitement in the air, emanating from the vast crowds that invariably assemble on this occasion, or the pealing bells, and the great shout of joy which goes up when the dove's flight proves successful. The origin of this curious ceremony dates back to the first Crusade, when a young Florentine knight brought back from the Holy Land some of the sacred fire which is kindled every Easter-eve in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The story relates that, in his anxiety lest a strong puff of wind should blow out this precious gift to his city, the young crusader rode his horse backward all the way from the ship which landed him, to Florence. In the streets, as he rode along, the people, astonished at his strange method of journeying, concluded that he was mad, and ran after him shouting "Pazzo! pazzo!" (Madman! madman!) and from that day forward the knight's family were known as the Pazzi, a name venerated by the Catholic Church in the great saint, Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, but unfortunately blackened by the infamous plot to murder the Medici brothers, Lorenzo and Giuliano, a crime which has branded the Pazzi with ignominy for all time. Ever since the "Pazzo" brought the sacred fire to Florence

the curious "Feast of the Dove" has been celebrated each Easter-eve, and a superstition connecting it with the success of the year's harvest has become associated with it in the minds of the agricultural population.

The preparations for the dove's flight are simple enough. From the high altar of the cathedral a wire is stretched down to the great west door, before which stands a huge car, a model of the old "war car" of the Florentines, covered with fireworks and squibs, giving it the appearance of an overgrown chocolate-and-pink sugar-cake. At 10.30 the Archbishop of Florence says Mass, and punctually at 11 o'clock he reaches the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," and touching a button he sets in motion the mechanical dove, which, in the charge of a fireman, is ready for this signal, and at once, with much fizzing and scattering of sparks, it takes its flight along the wire. As the dove rushes down the nave there is a hush, the crowd holding its breath, and watching. Suddenly there rises a loud cry, "Camina, Camina," as they perceive that the dove is pursuing its way steadily and swiftly towards the door. A tremendous shout greets its appearance on the open Piazza, as, darting out in the brilliant sunshine, it reaches the car, lights the fuse, then turns

THE "SCOPPIO DEL CARRO," OR FEAST OF THE DOVE ON EASTER EVEN

Showing the great car outside the Cathedral door, at the moment when the fireworks explode.

FLORENCE - DUOMO

and flies back to the fireman, its task safely accomplished. Then the big bell of the Campanile peals overhead, and all the bells of the city, silent since Maundy Thursday morning, answer, and there is one deafening clamour of bells, exploding squibs, and shouting people, until presently the crowd opens out to make passage for the yoke of magnificent white oxen whose task it is to drag the car from the Piazza del Duomo to the old Pazzi palace, where there is a repetition of the dove's flight, and the remaining fireworks are exploded.

There is little doubt that many customs and superstitions to be found throughout Tuscany have some pagan origin, and several cannot be accounted for at all,—such as why on a certain Sunday in Lent small Florentine boys attempt to pin miniature ladders, cut out of paper, on to women's backs ; or, again, why the Cascine should be searched for crickets, to be sold in small painted wooden cages on the Feast of the Ascension—needless to remark that the poor little wild creatures pine away, and die in a very few days, in their strange new homes. Besides these and other obscure customs, there are many lucky signs and superstitions, and the old popular belief in the evil eye. Against this latter, charms are sold, and it is a very real

misfortune to any man or woman to be once suspected of possessing the evil eye, for it may sometimes cause serious annoyance and bad feeling. Lucky signs and omens are also plentiful, as, in the case of a man, good luck throughout the year will be his, if on New Year's day he sees, on first looking from his window, a woman passing by, and in the case of a woman, good luck if she sees a man. To meet a single monk, or a nun, especially on the staircase of a house, forebodes many vexations, and you will need to exercise the virtue of patience all day long; but, on the contrary, to meet three monks walking together is a happy omen,—luckier still should one good friar wear a beard. Again, when looking from your window, should you perceive at the same moment a priest, a girl dressed in red, and a white horse, good fortune will be yours, and if you play at the "Lotto" choose the figures which stand for priest, girl, and horse; and who knows what sum you may not win?—for win you assuredly must.

Much more might be added of signs and portents, of the weather and the moon, of herbs and lotions, were it not that time and space cry "Enough." We can only add, we wish the reader who may find pleasure in these pictures and slight descriptions of Florence and the sister cities, when his footsteps

A TUSCAN FARM

Oleanders in June.

F R Cuff 1904

lead him once more to Tuscany, may be conscious some bright morning, as he looks from his window, of the "three lucky portents." May they bring him good cheer in his wanderings through that beloved and sunny land!

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